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ABSTRACT

This report seeks to further the debate about the overall reform impact of Colorado's charter schools. It focuses on the characteristics and performance of the first 32 charter schools in the state, ones that have been operating for at least 2 years as of the end of the 1997-98 school year. The document identifies promising trends: the performance of these schools, as a whole, is stronger than state averages and school-district averages; the great majority of the charter schools in the study are meeting--or exceeding--the performance goals defined in their original plans; parent participation and parent satisfaction are high; teachers express high levels of satisfaction; and charter schools are gaining experience in measuring performance. Some concerns identified by the study include the finding that the population of charter-school students is not as diverse as the population of the state; six schools in the study did not provide sufficient data to enable the evaluation team to determine whether these schools were meeting expectations; several schools experienced a high rate of turnover in the building administrator position and/or among members of the governing board; and there has been little transfer of charter-school approaches or experiences to other public schools. (RJM)

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ED 429 345

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

The Characteristics, Status and Student Achievement Data of Colorado Charter Schools

PREPARED BY THE CLAYTON FOUNDATION
FOR

cde

THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

January 1999

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Denver, Colorado

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The State of Colorado enacted charter school legislation in 1993. The Colorado Charter Schools Act included a sunset provision that repealed the law in 1998. During the 1998 legislation session, the Colorado General Assembly reauthorized the Charter Schools Act without a future sunset. This action signaled the evolution of Colorado charter schools from a reform experiment to a permanent part of the public education infrastructure in Colorado.

It is certainly too early to conclude whether charter schools will have a major impact on public education in Colorado (and in the United States) or whether their impact will be limited to the more modest contribution of offering an appealing alternative for a small percentage of students in Colorado (and other states). The Act itself reflects the General Assembly's hope that charter schools will help "create an atmosphere in Colorado's public school system where research in developing different learning opportunities is actively pursued."

In addition to expanding the research base on charter schools in Colorado, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about the overall reform impact of charter schools. The information presented in this evaluation study about the characteristics and performance of the first 32 charter schools in the state is not likely to close the gap between charter school skeptics and proponents. Still, it may offer some common ground where all interested parties can look at what is, and what is not, going well in these new schools, and can begin to identify what, if anything, there is for other public schools to learn from the approaches and experiences of charter schools.

The implementation of charter schools in Colorado is a developmental process that is still ongoing, not an event that is completed. Therefore, both positive trends as well as issues of concern need to be monitored over time, with an emphasis on trying to understand not just whether the charter schools are succeeding, but why.

This study identifies several promising trends related to the performance of the 32 charter schools included in this study. These trends are discussed in greater detail later in this executive summary and analyzed at length in the full report:

- The performance of the charter schools, as a whole, on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is stronger than state averages, stronger than sponsoring district averages and stronger than the averages of other schools in the sponsoring districts who serve a population of students roughly comparable to the population served by charter schools.

- The great majority of charter schools in this study are meeting – or exceeding – the performance goals defined in their individual charters and school improvement plans.

- The level of parent participation and parent satisfaction in charter schools as a whole is very high.

- The market indicators -- waiting lists, retention rates, parent satisfaction – for the charter schools in this study overall are impressively bullish.

- The teachers of the charter schools in this study express high levels of satisfaction with their schools and very positive opinions about the effectiveness of their schools.

- As a group, the charter schools in this study are demonstrating increased maturity in their ability to measure, track and report student and school performance data.

This study also identifies issues of concern that should be monitored in future evaluation studies:

- While the charter schools in this study served a diverse population of students in the 1997-98 school year, the population of charter school students is not as diverse as the population of the state as a whole.

- Six schools (19%) in this study did not provide sufficient data to enable the evaluation team to determine whether they were meeting the expectations defined for their performance. This does not necessarily mean that the schools are not performing according to the terms of their charters, just that the schools did not produce data for this report that demonstrates such performance. Whether the issue is one of performance or reporting, however, a concern about accountability arises just the same.

- Several schools in the study have experienced a very high rate of turnover in their building administrator (principal, dean, director) position and/or among the members of their governing boards. Some level of administrative disequilibrium can fairly be attributed to the growing pains of designing and opening a new school. If these rates continue over time, however, they may adversely affect the schools' capacity to maintain stability, consistency and coherence in their administrative functions and in their school mission.

- It appears that, to date, there has been little transfer of charter school approaches or experiences to other public schools settings. This result is a product of (1) inadequate communication mechanisms and (2) the opinion of many public school leaders that charter schools are not implementing educational programs that are innovative and/or replicable in other public school settings.

The Evaluation Model

The Colorado charter schools in this study are a diverse lot. The range of experience among the schools with regard to nearly every issue discussed in this report is as broad as the differences between charter schools and their public school counterparts. Still,

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it is useful to talk in terms of averages and trends in order to paint a picture of these schools, their work and their record of achievement.

This 1998 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study is the third in a three-year, federally-funded series that examines key issues related to the early implementation of the Charter Schools Act and the performance of charter schools. The purpose of this evaluation study is three-fold:

- To provide data on charter school performance for purposes of accountability.
- To further the intent of the Act to use charter schools in an "R & D" capacity to better meet the educational needs of all of Colorado's students.
- To provide information about the reform effectiveness of the Colorado Charter Schools Act in its present form and operation.

This report includes the 32 charter schools that had been operating for at least two years as of the end of the 1997-98 school year. The study does not include schools in their first year of operation in order to give the schools adequate time to establish a baseline from which to measure their progress. Of the 32 schools included in this report, two opened in fall of 1993, 11 opened in fall of 1994, 10 opened in fall of 1995 and 9 opened in fall of 1996.

The 32 schools included in this study, listed with their sponsoring districts, are:
- Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley School District)
- Mountain View Core Knowledge Academy (Canon City School District)
- Cherry Creek Charter Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
- Cheyenne Mountain Charter School (Cheyenne Mountain School District 12)
- Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- GLOBE Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- Roosevelt-Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
- Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
- EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R)
- Eagle County Charter School (Eagle County School District)
- Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
- Collegiate Academy[1] (Jefferson County School District)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
- Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
- Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County School District)
- Jefferson Academy Junior High (Jefferson County School District)
- Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)

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[1] Collegiate Academy operated under the name of Sci Tech Academy in its first three years of operation.

- Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)
- Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
- Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez School District)
- Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park School District)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
- Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70)
- Swallows Academy (Pueblo School District 70)
- Aspen/Carbondale Community School (Roaring Fork School District)
- Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)

This evaluation study rests primarily on a paper review of student achievement and school performance data regularly maintained by the charter schools and reported to their sponsoring districts. The evaluation team did not make site visits to the schools. The evaluation team did not administer any student assessments. The only original data collection undertaken by the evaluation team was a series of questionnaires related to teacher satisfaction, charter school waivers, and the opinion of charter school and sponsoring district representatives about the reform impact of charter schools.

This approach to a statewide evaluation is consistent with the Colorado charter school model, which places authority for accountability and renewal with sponsoring districts. It has its limitations, however. This evaluation study provides information about student/school/teacher characteristics, student achievement/school performance and charter school funding to create a fairly detailed state-level picture of charter schools, both as individual schools and as a group. There are many effective practices going on in individual Charter Schools that are not fully captured by an evaluation of this sort. Similarly, there may be red flags or issues of concern with respect to individual charter schools that are not identified through a paper review.

Student Achievement, School Performance and Accountability

At the core of the Colorado Charter Schools Act are two central goals: to provide charter schools with significant autonomy in order to promote innovation and effective practices and to hold the charter schools accountable for the results they achieve. These goals are in direct tension when it comes to **state-level** efforts to evaluate the progress of charter schools as a whole, especially in a comparative way. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act was intended to promote is antithetical to the standardization required for direct comparisons.

To balance the demand for accountability against the autonomy that schools should be – and are – exercising under the Act, this study takes a multidimensional approach to evaluating the performance of charter schools and the achievement of charter school students. The study reviews the performance of Colorado charter schools and their students on five different indicators or categories of information:

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1. The schools' performance on the Colorado Student Assessment Program.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is a statewide, single point-in-time assessment that is aligned with the state model content standards. The CSAP was administered to fourth grade students in reading and writing in Spring 1997 and to fourth grade students in reading and writing and to third grade students in reading in Spring 1998. The state plans to add new grade levels and content areas to this assessment effort annually, at least until the year 2001. By that year, all public schools in Colorado will be participating in the CSAP.

The evaluation study presents CSAP scores for the charters schools in two ways: (1) a school's individual progress against its baseline scores and (2) a school's relative performance compared to the performance of students in the school's sponsoring district and in other public schools within the district that serve a roughly comparable student population.

Conclusions:

- CSAP results were reported for fifteen (nearly half) of the schools in this study. The remaining schools either do not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program or administered the test to too few students (less than 16) to report the results publicly.

- As a group, the charter schools in this study out-performed the state average score on the CSAP by about 15% on each of the three assessments.

- Well over three-quarters of the charter schools in this study outperformed the average scores of their sponsoring districts on the CSAP.

- Finally, the charter schools in this study outperformed other public schools in their district that serve a roughly comparable student population (based on free-lunch eligibility, racial/ethnic composition and eligibility for special education services) on the fourth grade writing and third grade reading test and performed at generally similar levels on the fourth grade reading assessment.

2. Individual School Profiles

These profiles, contained in the full evaluation report, present the achievement of each school against its own performance goals, as measured by assessment tools chosen by the school. These profiles do not describe the universe of assessment activities that are ongoing in the charter schools, only those assessment results reported by the charter schools in their school improvement plans, annual reports and/or in the materials they submitted for this evaluation study.

Conclusions:

In order to provide an overall judgment about the progress of the individual schools in this study, the evaluation team looked at the student achievement and school performance data reported by the charter schools, in the context of the schools' own performance goals, the achievement levels in the sponsoring district, the population served by the schools and other variables that affect a school's performance. The conclusions of the evaluation team rest solely on a paper review of data reported by the charter schools' in their annual reports, school improvement plans and/or completed evaluation materials. The evaluation team did not make site visits to the schools in the study or administer any assessments.

On the basis of this limited review, the study offers these observations:

- *Eleven schools in the study (34%) provided data that indicate they are* ***exceeding*** *the expectations defined for their performance:*

    - Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley School District)
    - Mountain View Core Knowledge (Canon City School District)
    - Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
    - Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain School District)
    - Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County School District)
    - Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)
    - Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)
    - Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70).

- *Fifteen schools (47%) provided data that generally indicate they are* ***meeting expectations*** *defined for their performance:*

    - Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Roosevelt Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
    - Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
    - Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District)
    - Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
    - Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez School District)
    - Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park School District)
    - Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
    - Swallows Academy (Pueblo School District 70)
    - Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District).

- *Five schools (16%) did not provide sufficient data to indicate whether they are meeting the expectations defined for their performance.* Based on the information provided by these schools, the evaluators cannot offer a judgment about their progress. This does not necessarily mean that the schools are not performing according to the terms of their charters; just that the schools have not produced data for this report that demonstrates such performance.
    - Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
    - Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
    - Alpine Charter School (Summit School District).

- One school (3%) did not return completed evaluation materials:
    - EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R).

3. Market-Based Indicators

As schools of choice, charter school performance also can be measured by market-based indicators, such as the demand for the school (waiting lists), parent involvement and satisfaction, and re-enrollment rates.

Conclusions:

- None of the schools in this study experienced enrollment levels under planned capacity. The great majority of schools had waiting lists, in some cases, very extensive ones.

- Parent satisfaction and teacher satisfaction was reported at high levels (discussed in more detail below).

- While a few schools struggled to maintain stable enrollment, the majority of schools met or exceeded their goals for re-enrollment.

4. Designation by the Colorado Department of Education as Schools of Excellence or Challenger Schools.

In order to be considered for this recognition, public schools must take the initiative to apply. Every Colorado school is eligible to apply. These designations represent the only statutory, statewide recognition program of Colorado schools by the Colorado Department of Education.

Conclusions:

- The 32 charter schools in this evaluation study represent 2% of the total number of public schools in the state of Colorado. Yet, they account for 20% of the Colorado Schools of Excellence and 19% of the Challenger Schools.

5. *Charter Renewals*

Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, the renewal process is the ultimate tool of accountability. A charter renewal signals the satisfaction of the sponsoring district that the charter school is making good on the commitments spelled out in the charter agreement.

Conclusions:

- Of the 32 schools in this study, 17 have undertaken the process of renewing their original charter. All of these 17 schools have successfully completed the renewal process. In all but one instance, the term of the charter renewal was equal to or greater than the original term of the charter.

- The processes and criteria applied by sponsoring districts to consider the renewal of a charter varied broadly. Some processes and criteria were well-defined; others were less so. The full report contains a discussion of the range of these practices. It also presents the reflections of charter school representatives on their experience with the renewal process.

Characteristics of Colorado Charter Schools

- The 32 charter schools in this study served 7,213 students during the 1997-98 school year.

- The **average size** of the charter schools in this study was 230. Of the 32 schools, 19% served less than 100 students, 38% served between 101 and 200 students, 25% between 201 and 300 students and the rest served over 300 students.

- Twenty charter schools in the study (66%) have **student-to-teacher ratios** of 20.0 or less. Nineteen of the 32 schools have ratios that are smaller than those of their sponsoring districts.

- Only five of the 32 schools in this study fit the traditional **grade level configuration** of elementary, middle or high school. Nearly half of the schools in the study serve elementary or elementary and middle school students.

- There is broad diversity among the charter schools relative to the **source of students enrolled in their schools**, depending on their location, size and educational program. The percentage of students drawn from home schools ranged from 0.4% to 44%. The percentage of students drawn from private schools ranged from 2% to 15%. The percentage of students drawn from other public schools ranged from 51% to 99%.

- The charter schools in this study offered a **range of educational approaches**, although the question of whether any of these approaches are particularly innovative is subject to debate. The charter schools were plowing new ground in the areas of school governance, parent and community involvement and employment practices.

Characteristics of Colorado Charter School Students

- **Diversity.** As a group, the charter schools in this study served a population that is diverse, but not as diverse as the population served by public schools overall. About 12% of the students served by the 32 charter schools in this study were eligible for free lunch, compared to a state average of 21.9%. The charter schools in this study served 18.5% racial/ethnic minority students, compared to a state average of 28.6%. About 6% of the students served by the charter schools in this study were eligible for special education services, compared to a state average of 9.9%.

While these comparisons highlight an issue that should be closely monitored in future charter school evaluations, they have to be read with some caution. The charter school percentages were calculated using CDE data that was collected from the schools on "count day" in October 1997. CDE data show "0%" in instances where the school did not report the relevant data. Similarly, CDE data shows a "0%" for students who are eligible for free lunch if the school does not administer a lunch program even though it may serve students who are economically disadvantaged.

The total number of charter school students in this study is small compared to the student enrollment in all public schools (representing approximately 1.1% of the total student population.) Therefore, the overall percentages could change significantly with only slight alternations in the composition of student enrollment. Finally, a pattern of racial concentration in a particular school may result from the school's location and does not necessarily suggest a deliberate policy of exclusion. The location of a charter school, in turn, depends on the willingness of communities and school districts to welcome, or at least support, the existence of charter schools.

- The **rate of suspensions and expulsions** in a school is a commonly used indicator of school climate. These rates are a product of many factors, including the strictness of a school's discipline code, the students the school serves and the school's capacity (including adequate resources) to provide alternative learning opportunities for disruptive students. Nearly two-thirds of the charter schools in the study had a suspension rate for the 1997-98 school year that was the same or lower than the rate of suspension in their sponsoring district. Almost 90% of the schools in the study had expulsion rates below the district average.

Characteristics of Colorado Charter School Teachers

- The **average teacher salary** for the charter schools in this study was $26,802, compared to a state average of $37,240. In general, the charter schools in the study employed teachers with less **experience** and who held fewer **post-baccalaureate degrees** than teachers employed by other public schools.

The evaluation team asked the 32 schools participating in this evaluation study to distribute a four-page questionnaire to each of their teachers.[2] Twenty-five schools returned completed questionnaires, twenty-three of them at a rate in excess of 80% participation. This extensive survey of Colorado charter school teachers produced these findings and conclusions:

- Although 94% of the charter schools in this study received a waiver of the Colorado Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act, the statewide impact of these waivers on the employment of non-certificated teachers has not been dramatic. Sixty-three percent of those surveyed were already certified. Another 27% had been certified in another state or were pursuing certification. Only 10% of the survey respondents were not certified and were not actively working toward certification.

- Of the charter school teachers who responded to the teacher survey, only 5% were members of their teachers' union (compared to 80% statewide.)

- Charter school teachers cited the school's educational philosophy (83%), the opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues (67%), good administrators (54%), the opportunity to teach in (and help shape) a new school (52%), and committed parents (50%) as the leading factors in their decision to join a charter school. Teachers expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their peers, the educational philosophy of the school, school size, administrators and students. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their school's physical facilities.

Governance/Parent Involvement

- Parents held a majority on the governing boards in 27 of the 32 schools (84%) in the study. A majority of the schools have changed the structure of their governing boards since opening. Thirty-two percent of the schools have employed three or more chief administrators (deans, principals) since the school opened.

- Overall, parent involvement in charter schools was both deep and wide. Ninety-four percent of the schools in the study regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey that is tied to their school's unique mission. Of the 32 schools in this study, twelve provided the evaluation team with copies of the survey instrument and results from their latest parent survey. These surveys evidenced an extraordinary level of parent satisfaction. The percentage of parents who agreed that the charter school meets the needs of their children ranged from 85% to 100%. Parents also generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of their communication with the schools.

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[2] The teacher questionnaire was developed by the Hudson Institute and the Brookings Institute in connection with a national study of charter schools and used with their permission. A copy of the questionnaire is contained in the Appendix to the full report.

CHARTER SCHOOL FINANCES

Funding

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that the charter school and the sponsoring district "shall agree to funding and on any services to be provided by the school district to the charter school." The Act requires that the funding negotiated "cannot be less than eighty percent of the district per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) multiplied by the number of pupils enrolled in the charter school." PPOR is the funding for a district that represents the financial base of support for public education in that district, divided by the district's funded pupil count, minus the minimum amount of funds required to be transferred to the capital reserve fund, the insurance reserve fund or any other fund for the management of risk-related activities.

- The charter schools in the 1998 evaluation study negotiated rates for the 1997-98 school year that ranged from 80% of the district PPOR to in excess of 100%. Half of the schools received a funding rate of between 80% and 90%. About 38% of the schools received a funding rate of 100% or more.

- Charter schools relied on public funds for the great majority of their revenue. Most of the schools in the study also generated funds from fundraising, grants, student fees and other activities.

Facility Costs

The majority of the charter schools in this study (22 of 31 reporting schools or 71%) rented their facilities or used facilities donated by organizations because they could not secure appropriate district facilities for use. Almost two-thirds of the schools paid rent out of their operating budgets. For these schools, rent represented an average of 10.3% of their total operating revenue.

Building improvement costs incurred by the charter schools for the 1997-98 school year ranged very widely, from $0 to a $2.7 million commitment to purchase a new facility.

Impact of Waivers on the Operation of Colorado Charter Schools

All 32 charter schools included in the study sought at least one waiver of state law. Thirty-one of the schools (97%) pursued multiple waivers. There is a definite pattern of waiver requests among the charter schools, despite the wide range of philosophies represented by these schools.

- 94% of the schools sought a waiver of the Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act.
- 94% of the sought a waiver of the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act.
- 85% of the schools sought a wavier of the Act related to Local Board Duties.
- 78% of the schools sought a waiver of the statute related to the Employment and Authority of Principals.
- 69% of the schools sought a waiver of the Act related to Local Board Powers.

A great majority of charter schools in the study stated that the waivers related to site control of curriculum and employment/personnel issues were of the highest priority in providing schools with the autonomy to implement their educational programs.

Prior to the advent of charter schools in Colorado, districts invoked the waiver statute sparingly and primarily for minor issues. In the four years prior to the passage of the Charter Schools Act, the period from 1989 to 1993, the state board granted twenty waivers. Between 1994 and 1997, in contrast, charter schools sought and received a total of 96 waivers. During that same period (1994 to 1997), the number of waiver requests granted to public school districts remained a modest 18.

There are several explanations for the expansive use of the waiver law by charter schools. The first explanation is a practical one: as schools of choice, it is easier for charter schools to obtain the concurrences required by the waiver statute. Another explanation is that the budget constraints facing charter schools force them to do business in a different way. A third explanation is philosophical. In order to implement a distinctive educational program, the great majority of charter schools have attempted to establish considerable autonomy from their sponsoring district in matters related to personnel, governance and educational approach (e.g. testing, curriculum, instruction, discipline code, professional development activities).

The cumulative record of the charter schools in this study suggests that the existing process for permitting charter schools to secure waivers is adequate to enable these schools to overcome statutory barriers to the successful implementation of their distinctive programs. The commonality of the waiver requests, however, and the time and effort required of the charter schools, sponsoring districts and CDE to prepare and hear waiver requests argue in favor of a blanket waiver approach.

Reflections on the Impact of Charter Schools on Public Education in Colorado

These reflections describe the perspectives of three groups related to the reform impact of charter schools on public education in Colorado:

(1) representatives of the charter schools participating in this study;
(2) representatives of their sponsoring districts; and

(3) representatives of the major education organizations in the state (Colorado Parent Teacher Association, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Federation of Teachers).

Charter school representatives participated in a series of five focus groups held throughout the state in the spring and summer of 1998 and through a questionnaire that was completed by 24 of the 32 participating schools.

Sponsoring district representatives participated through a questionnaire that was completed by eight of the 21 school districts that sponsor charter schools in this evaluation study.

Representatives of the statewide education organizations participated through individual telephone interviews with members of the evaluation team.

The conclusions expressed in the following discussion do not represent consensus opinions of the various respondent groups, but rather are a collection of responses from individuals within each group.

Charter School Perspectives:

Charter school representatives identified a number of areas where charter schools have had a positive impact on public education. These include:

- Expanding Choices by increasing public awareness about the need to offer more choices to students and their parents to better meet the educational needs of all students; drawing students into public schools who were formerly home schooled or enrolled in private schools; providing a "release valve" within the public system for parents who are dissatisfied with their experience in other public schools; and providing the impetus for spin-offs or replications of similar school models.

- Successfully Engaging Parents and Community in partnerships, in governance and in supporting the success of students.

- Increased Academic Expectations. Academically rigorous charter schools may have contributed to increased academic expectations on the part of public schools. Charter schools may have caused districts to be more responsive to parent concerns related to curriculum and academic expectations.

- Variety of Educational Approaches and Structures, including smaller school size, smaller student-to-teacher ratio, clarity of mission and nontraditional administrative structures.

- Accountability. Charter school representatives felt that charter schools have contributed to a state climate that is more focused on accountability and results in education.

Sponsoring District Perspectives:

On the plus side, representatives of sponsoring districts recognized that charter schools have created additional public school choices, thereby promoting parent involvement and making schools more sensitive to the needs of diverse learners.

Sponsoring district representatives cited smaller class size, increased parent involvement and the process of standards development and alignment as among the charter school accomplishments that may be transferable to other public schools.

Sponsoring districts also noted some negative impacts of charter schools on the public education system in Colorado, including:

- The significant negative financial impact of charter schools on public school districts. This impact is felt in two ways. First, charter schools reduce the overall level of funds available for operating non-charter schools by decreasing the student count without eliminating commensurate overhead costs. Second, the administrative time necessary to negotiate contracts and manage relationships with charter schools has a negative financial impact on the district.

- Heightened criticism of public schools.

Perspectives of Statewide Education Organizations (PTA, CEA, CASE, CASB, CFT):

Organizational representatives identified the following positive impacts of charter schools on the state's system of pubic education:

- Charter schools have increased the choices available to students and their families and have given parents a greater opportunity to match their children's learning needs with a compatible educational approach.

- These expanded choices benefited public schools by creating new opportunities for families that had not yet found a comfortable "fit" in public schools.

- Charter schools helped foster a state-level dialogue about education reform.

- The focus of many Colorado charter schools on a core curriculum may have contributed to the success of the standards movement in Colorado.

- The charter schools' generally small size and their ability to commit to a mission are perceived as strengths that other public schools might want to try to emulate.

Representatives from these organizations expressed reservations or concerns about these issues:

- Charter schools have not, as yet, established themselves as labs of innovation and experimentation. Some respondents felt that the charter schools simply are not doing things in a new or different way. Others stated that even if the charter schools were innovating, their practices would not be broadly replicable because of the smaller class sizes that charter schools generally have.

- Charter schools have advantages (a more expansive waiver option, looser accountability mechanisms and standards, and more support in the court of public opinion) that their public school counterparts do not. These advantages make transfers of experience or practices from one setting to the other problematic.

According to representatives of statewide education organizations, the primary negative impact of charter schools is the financial drain that charter schools have had on the public school system. Charter schools were also said to have diverted attention from educational reforms that hold the potential to improve results for all students.

Mechanisms that Support the Transfer of Charter School Success/Experiences to Other Public Schools

The evaluation team asked representatives from both the charter schools in this study and from sponsoring districts what accomplishments, lessons or experiences of the charters schools, if any, had been transferred to other public school settings and what mechanisms were in place to facilitate this exchange.

Although there are a few notable exceptions, it appears that successful elements or attributes of charter schools have not, as yet, been transferred broadly to other public school settings. There are two distinct, but related, explanations for the limited transfer of knowledge to date. First, for the most part, there are no or few formal communication channels within the sponsoring districts for sharing charter school experiences with other public schools. Second, again, for the most part, sponsoring districts and other educational leaders do not seem convinced that the educational programs of the charter schools are particularly innovative or replicable in other public settings.

PART I - INTRODUCTION

This 1998 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study is the third in a three-year, federally-funded series that examines key issues related to the early implementation of the Charter Schools Act and the performance of charter schools. **The purpose of this evaluation study is three-fold:**

- **To provide data on charter school performance for purposes of accountability.**
- **To further the intent of the Act to use charter schools in an "R & D" capacity to better meet the educational needs of all of Colorado's students.**
- **To provide information about the reform effectiveness of the Colorado Charter Schools Act in its present form and operation.**

To achieve these purposes, this report includes:

- Extensive information about the **characteristics of charter schools, their students and teachers;**
- A discussion of the **governance** of charter schools and the **participation of parents** in charter schools;
- A range of **data related to student achievement and school performance**;
- Information about **charter school funding**, with an emphasis on the facility costs incurred by charter schools and the percentage of the per pupil operating revenue (PPRO) that sponsoring districts pass through to charter schools.
- A detailed **analysis of the waivers sought by charter schools** and the impact of these waivers on their educational programs.

This report also summarizes the results of a series of focus groups and questionnaires administered particularly for this third-year evaluation study. The responses to the questionnaires and focus groups represent the perspective of charter school administrators/board members and representatives from sponsoring districts on the impact of charter schools in Colorado. They also include the respondents' suggestions about changes that could be made to strengthen the current Colorado charter school law.

To round out this discussion, the evaluation team also interviewed by phone representatives of the major statewide education organizations (Colorado Parent Teacher Association, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Association of School Boards and Colorado Federation of Teachers) to solicit their opinions regarding the impact of charter schools on public education in Colorado and recommended changes to the current law.

This report includes the 32 charter schools that had been operating for at least two years as of the end of the 1997-98 school year. The study does not include schools in their first year of operation in order to give the schools adequate time to establish a baseline from which to measure their progress. Of the 32 schools included in this report, two opened in fall of 1993, 11 opened in fall of 1994, 10 opened in the fall of 1995 and 9 opened in the fall of 1996.

The 32 schools included in this study, listed with their sponsoring districts, are:
- Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley School District)
- Mountain View Core Knowledge Academy (Canon City School District)
- Cherry Creek Charter Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
- Cheyenne Mountain Charter School (Cheyenne Mountain School District 12)
- Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- GLOBE Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- Roosevelt-Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
- Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
- EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R)
- Eagle County Charter School (Eagle County School District)
- Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
- Collegiate Academy[1] (Jefferson County)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
- Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
- Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County School District)
- Jefferson Academy Junior High (Jefferson County School District)
- Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)
- Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)
- Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
- Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez School District)
- Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park School District)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
- Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70)
- Swallows Academy (Pueblo School District 70)
- Aspen/Carbondale Community School (Roaring Fork School District)
- Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)

An Evaluation Approach Consistent with the Act

Pursuant to the statutory mandate contained in the Act – "the state board shall compile evaluations of charter schools received from local boards of education"[2] -- **this evaluation study rests primarily on a paper review of student achievement and**

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[1] Collegiate Academy operated under the name of Sci Tech Academy in its first three years of operation.
[2] Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-113(1)

school performance data regularly maintained by the charter school and reported to their sponsoring districts.

The evaluation team did not make site visits to the schools. The evaluation team did not administer any student assessments. The only original data collection undertaken by the evaluation team (described in detail below) took the form of a series of questionnaires related to teacher satisfaction, charter school waivers and the opinion of charter school and sponsoring district representatives about the reform impact of charter schools and proposed changes in the charter school law.

This evaluation approach is consistent with the Colorado charter school model, which places authority for accountability and renewal with sponsoring districts. It has its limitations, however. The study provides useful information about student/school/teacher characteristics, student achievement/school performance and charter school funding to create a fairly detailed state-level picture of charter schools, both as individual schools and as a group. There are effective and promising practices going on in individual charter schools that are not fully captured by an evaluation of this sort. Similarly, there may be red flags or issues of concern with respect to individual charter schools that are not identified through a paper review.

At the core of the Colorado Charter Schools Act are two central goals: to provide charter schools with significant autonomy in order to promote innovation and effective practices and to hold the charter schools accountable for the results they achieve. These goals are in direct tension when it comes to ***state-level*** *efforts to evaluate the progress of charter schools as a whole, especially in a comparative way. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act was intended to promote is antithetical to the standardization required for direct comparisons.*

Under the Colorado charter school model, the authority to grant a charter, as well as the authority to enforce accountability by revoking or non-renewing a charter, rests with local school districts. This model is consistent with Colorado's long and fervently-held tradition of local control of schools. It contributes to the Act's potential to foster a diverse range of charter school programs and approaches.

Through the application process, each individual sponsoring school district has the discretion to approve a charter school's performance goals and its plan for assessing and reporting the academic progress of students. As charters come up for renewal, sponsoring districts are required to make judgments about whether students in a particular charter school are attaining appropriate levels of achievement and meeting the goals of the charter.

The charter schools included in this study established different performance goals by which to measure their success and used different tools to assess student achievement. This is consistent with and in furtherance of the Act. This diversity in approach clearly contributes to the goals of choice and innovation. The same lack of standardization, however, makes it impossible to provide many direct comparisons that some consider useful for accountability purposes.

To balance the demand for accountability against the autonomy that schools should – and are – exercising under the Act, this study takes a multidimensional approach to evaluating the performance of charter schools and the achievement of charter school students. **The study reviews the performance of Colorado charter schools and their students using the following indicators:**

1. **The schools' performance on the Colorado Student Assessment Program.** CSAP scores are evaluated in two ways: (1) a school's individual progress against its baseline scores and (2) a school's relative performance compared to the performance of students in the state, in the school's sponsoring district and in other public schools within the district that serve a roughly comparable student population. CSAP scores are only available for about half of the schools in the study -- those schools that offer a 3rd and/or 4th grade program and who administer the test to 16 or more students in each grade.

2. **Individual school profiles of student achievement and school performance.** These profiles present the achievement of each school against its own performance goals, as measured by assessment tools chosen by the school. It is important to note that these profiles do not describe the universe of assessment activities that are ongoing in the charter schools. They only include those indicators that were reported by the charter schools in their annual school improvement plans, annual reports and/or in the materials they submitted for this evaluation study.

3. As schools of choice, charter school performance can also be measured by **market-based indicators, such as the demand for the school (waiting lists), parent involvement and satisfaction, and re-enrollment rates.**

4. A fourth measure of a school's performance and a commitment to accountability is the Colorado Department of Education's **designation as Schools of Excellence or Challenger Schools.**

5. Finally, the **renewal record of the charter schools** provides a measure of their performance. Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, the renewal process is the ultimate tool of accountability. A charter renewal signals the satisfaction of the sponsoring district that the charter school is making good on the commitments spelled out in the charter agreement.

Data Collection

The evaluation team reviewed the charter applications, charter contracts, annual reports, annual school improvement plans and any other documentation that the Colorado Department of Education had in its files.

In addition, the evaluation team collected the following data:

- Data matrices completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to obtain data on the school's educational program, budget, governance process and population.

- Questionnaire completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to determine impact of waivers and alternative approaches being used by the charter schools.

- Focus groups of charter school directors/deans/administrators regarding reform impact of charter schools and proposed changes in the charter school law.

- Questionnaire completed by sponsoring districts regarding reform impact of charter schools and proposed changes in the charter school law.

- A review of parent satisfaction survey instruments used by the charter schools in the study and an analysis of the data collected through these instruments.

- An extensive survey of teachers in Colorado charter schools.

- Telephone interviews with representatives of major statewide education organizations (Colorado Parent Teacher Association, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Association of School Boards and Colorado Federal of Teachers) about the reform impact of charter schools and proposed changes in the charter school law.

Copies of the data matrix and questionnaires are included in the Appendix. All but one (Excel School, Durango School District 9-R) of the schools in the study returned completed materials. The data matrix was not completed fully in all cases. Therefore, the discussion of some specific issues may reflect that data for a particular school was not available.

Reporting Notes

Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County School District) opened in the 1996 year to continue the educational program offered by Jefferson Academy Elementary School, which opened in 1994. Where noted, data for some school characteristics was reported for both schools combined. In all other cases, the data was reported separately by each individual school.

Aspen Community School has a single charter that was granted in 1994. Aspen Community School operates two separate campuses, a school with 114 students in Woody Creek (K-8) and a school with 33 students in Carbondale (K-3). Because these schools operate under a single charter, the data is reported for both campuses under the name of the Aspen Community School.

PART II - THE COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 93-183, the Colorado Charter Schools Law, with broad bipartisan support. In the legislative declaration of the Act, the state articulated the basis for the law as follows:

- All Colorado children should attend schools that reflect high expectations and create conditions where those expectations can be met.
- The best education decisions are made by those who know the students best and who are responsible for implementing decisions, and, therefore, educators and parents have a right and a responsibility to participate in the education institutions that serve them.
- Different pupils learn differently and public school programs should be designed to fit the needs of individual students.
- There are parents, citizens and educators in Colorado who are willing and able to provide innovative programs educational techniques and environments, but who lack a channel through which to act.

The Act also spelled out these specific purposes of the Charter School law:

- To improve pupil learning by creating schools with high, rigorous standards for pupil performance.
- To increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are academically low-achieving.
- To encourage diverse approaches to learning and education and the use of different, innovative, and proven teaching methods.
- To allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement.
- To create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- To provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of education opportunities that are available to students within the public school system.
- To encourage parental and community involvement with public schools.
- To hold charter schools accountable for meeting state board and school district content standards and to provide such schools with a method to change accountability systems.

Members of the Colorado General Assembly recognized they were creating a reform that had potential, but that carried no guarantees. "In authorizing charter schools, it is the intent of the general assembly to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public education system. The general assembly seeks to create an atmosphere in Colorado's public school system where research and development in developing different learning opportunities is actively pursued."

Colorado was one of the first states in the nation to implement charter school legislation. Education researchers continue to characterize Colorado's charter school law as a "strong model."[3] As of 1998, 32 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had charter legislation on the books. These charter schools laws vary broadly in terms of their provisions and scope.

The original Colorado Charter Schools Act contained a sunset provision that repealed the entire law in 1998. In 1998, the Colorado General Assembly reauthorized the Charter School Act without a future sunset provision. This action signaled the evolution of Colorado charter schools from a reform experiment to a permanent part of the public school education infrastructure in Colorado.

The Debate Surrounding the Potential of Charter Schools as a Tool of Educational Reform

In Colorado and across the nation, the potential of charter schools to support higher student achievement and drive education reform was - and continues to be – vigorously debated. The arguments, pro and con, provide a useful screen through which to consider the information contained in this evaluation study.

Pros – Charter Schools will:

- Curtail bureaucracy, letting schools concentrate on producing educational results, not on compliance with regulations.
- Hold schools and teachers accountable for student performance.
- Provide incentives to school personnel by linking improved student achievement to the continuance of their jobs and of the school itself.
- Facilitate innovation in areas such as organizational structure, scheduling, staffing, curriculum and instruction and assessment.
- Increase parental involvement.
- Expand the range of educational options for students and professional options for teachers.
- Provide both competition and models that may spark districts to improve their own practices and schools.

Cons - Charter schools will:

- Siphon badly needed funds from public schools.
- Erode the hard-won collective bargaining and tenure rights of teachers.
- Become elite, pseudo-private academics supported by public funds, increasing the segregation of schools by race and socioeconomic class.

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[3] Center for Education Reform, "Charter School Legislation: State Rankings," October 1998.

- Do little more than duplicate current reform efforts. Innovation is already abundant in public schools.

The Process for Obtaining a Charter in Colorado

The Colorado Charter School Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-101, allows any group of parents, teachers and/or community members to develop a charter application. Only local boards of education can grant charters. The application process defined in the Colorado law is rigorous, requiring applicants to set out:

- A mission statement, goals, objectives and performance goals for students in the school.
- Evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers and students support the formation of the charter school.
- A detailed description of the school's educational program, pupil performance standards and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any content standards adopted by the school district in which the charter school is located and which must be designed to enable each student to achieve the standards.
- A description of the charter school's plan for evaluating student performance, including the types of assessments and a timeline for meeting the school's performance goals.
- Evidence that the charter school's plan is economically sound for both the charter school and the sponsoring district, a proposed budget and a description of the annual audit process.
- A description of the governance and operation of the charter school.
- An explanation of the relationships that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees.
- An agreement between the parties regarding their respective legal liability and applicable insurance coverage.
- A description of how the charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its students.
- A description of the school's enrollment policy.

A charter application, once approved by a local school district, serves as the basis for a contract between the charter school and the local board of education. The contract includes all agreements between the charter school and the sponsoring district regarding the release of the school from local district policies.

The charter application also contains all requests for waivers from the operation of state law or regulations. These requests must be made jointly by the charter school and the local board of education to the State Board of Education.

Sponsoring districts can approve a charter for a period not to exceed five years. Charters are renewable, upon re-application by the school to the sponsoring district.

The Appeal Process

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides a process for appeal to the State Board of Education of a local board of education decision to grant or deny a charter. The State Board has the authority to review the decision of the local board and uphold it or remand it back to the local board for further consideration. If the local board denies the charter upon remand, that decision also is subject to appeal to the State Board.

The State Board applies this standard of review: whether the decision of the local board was "contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community." Timelines are built into the Act to keep the review and appeal process on track.

As of August 1998, the State Board has heard 59 appeals under the Colorado Charter Schools Act. Of this total number, the State Board has:

- upheld 24 local board of education decisions,
- remanded 18 local decisions back to the local board of education for reconsideration,
- ordered the establishment of one charter school,[4]
- overturned one local board revocation of a charter,
- vacated one hearing, and
- dismissed 14 appeals.

Of the 60 charter schools that have been approved as of September 1998, twelve (20%) exist, in part, because of the role played by the State Board of Education in resolving disputes between local school districts and charter school applicants or operators.

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[4] The local board of education has challenged the board's decision in a legal action that is now pending in the Colorado Supreme Court.

PART III - CHARACTERISTICS OF COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS

As of fall 1998, 60 charter schools were operating in the state of Colorado, enrolling about 14,495 students. It is anticipated that another ten to twelve schools will open for the 1999-2000 school year.

Nationally, 786 charter schools were in operation across the United States, with a combined enrollment of 166,000 students. An additional 429 charter schools have been approved but were not yet operating. President Clinton has called for the quadrupling the number of charter schools by the year 2002.[5]

50 charter schools, enrolling about 11,400 students, were operating in Colorado during the time period on which this study is focused – the 1997-98 school year.[6] **The 32 charter schools in this study served 7,213 students during the 1997-98 school year.** The charter schools in the study represent 2.1% of Colorado's schools and 1.1% of the state's student population.

This section of the report looks at some key characteristics of the Colorado charter schools and the students and families they serve, in the context of statewide and national data.

School Size

The charter schools in the study range in size, depending on their location, the grades levels served and educational philosophy. Many charter schools continued to increase their enrollment as they added additional grades or as they built their capacity to serve more students.

Of the 32 schools in this 1998 Evaluation Study:

- **19% served under 100 students;**
- **38% served between 101 and 200 students;**
- **25% served between 201 and 300 students;**
- **3% served between 301 and 400 students;**

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[5] Education Commission of the States, *Progress of Reform 1998*. (1998). Denver: ECS.

[6] Of these fifty charters, 44 have been granted to groups of parents/teachers/community members, two to non-profit organizations, one to a for-profit organization, two to universities, and one to a city.

- 9% served between 401 and 500 students and
- 6% served over 500 students.

The average size of the charter schools in this study is 230.

Table 1 - Size of Charter Schools

School Size	Number of Schools	Charter School (Sponsoring District)
Under 100	6 (18.8%)	Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed) - 19 Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) - 26 Alpine Charter School (Summit) - 46 Crestone (Moffat Consolidated) - 47 Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County) - 56 Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70) - 59
101-200	12 (38%)	Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) - 122 EXCEL School (Durango) - 123 Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 128 Connect (Pueblo 70) - 132 GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) - 136 Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County) - 137 Excel Academy (Jefferson County) - 138 Aspen/Carbondale Community (Roaring Fork) - 147 Mountain View Core Knowledge (Canon City) - 149 Eagle (Eagle County) - 162 P.S. 1 - (Denver) - 162 Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park) - 193
201-300	8 (25%)	Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) - 226 Renaissance Charter (Douglas County) - 255 Community Involved (Jefferson County) - 259 Lewis Palmer Charter (Lewis Palmer) - 268 Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley) - 270 Core Knowledge (Douglas County)- 270 Jefferson Elementary (Jefferson County) - 280 Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) - 291
301-400	1 (3%)	Academy Charter (Douglas County) - 353
400-500	3 (9%)	Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) - 422 Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) - 440 Littleton Academy (Littleton) - 450
500+	2 (6%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - 763 Roosevelt-Edison (Colorado Springs 11) - 821

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1997

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School Size - The Colorado Context

In the fall of 1997, 1,544 public schools in Colorado served 687,167 students. The number of schools in Colorado has increased by 15.1% since 1987 and student membership has increased by 22.7%.

The average elementary school in Colorado serves 382 students. The average middle serves 545 students and the average junior high school serves 113 students. The average high school serves 682 and the average alternative high school serves 109 students.

School Size - The National Context

On a national basis, more than 60% of charter schools enroll fewer than 200 students each compared with just 16% of conventional public schools. More than 35% of charter schools nationally enroll fewer than 100 students. In contrast to these very small schools, about 14% of the charter schools have more than 600 students and 4% have more than 1,000 students. Charter schools have an estimated median enrollment of about 150 students, whereas the other public schools in the charter states have a median enrollment of about 500 students.[7]

Student-to-Teacher Ratio

For the purposes of this evaluation study, the Colorado Department of Education provided student-teacher ratios that reflect the ratio of students to all staff members assigned to professional activities or instructing students in self-contained classrooms or courses. The CDE count therefore includes not only classroom teachers, but also special education teachers and special subject teachers, including music, art, physical education and driver education. This definition is the one used in most national studies and enables Colorado data to be considered against national baselines.

Twenty charter schools (66%) have student-to-teacher ratios of 20.0 or less. Nineteen of the thirty-two charter schools in this study (59%) have ratios that are smaller than their sponsoring districts.

In the 1996 Charter Schools Evaluation Study, 85% of the charter schools in the study had a student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1 or less. This percentage fell fairly dramatically to 54% in the 1997 Evaluation Study. The 1998 figure of 66% represents a reversal of that direction. It is consistent with the fact that many charter schools in Colorado, as well as nationally, often emphasize a lower student-to-teacher ratio and or smaller class sizes.

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[7] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. *A National Study of Charter Schools - Second Year Report 1998.* Washington D.C.: 1998.

Table 2 - Student:Teacher Ratio for Charter Schools

Student-to-Teacher Ratio	Number of Schools	Charter School (Sponsoring District)
Less than 10:1	1 (3%)	Marble (Gunnison Watershed) 9.5 (14.2)
10:1 to 15:0	7 (23%)	Alpine (Summit) 11.5 (15.3)
		GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) 12.1 (18.8)
		P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools) 12.5 (19.3)
		EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) 13.4 (16.4)
		Roosevelt-Edison (Colorado Springs 11) 13.7 (18.8)
		Academy Charter School (Douglas County) 14.3 (18.5)
		Swallows (Pueblo 70) 14.8 (19.9)
15.01 - 20.0	12 (40%)	Excel Academy (Jefferson County) 15.3 (21.1)
		Crestone (Moffat Consolidated) 15.7 (8.7)
		Summit Middle School (Boulder) 15.9 (18.3)
		Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork) 16.3 (18.1)
		Jefferson Academy Elementary/Jr. High (Jefferson Cnty.) 16.6 (21.1)
		Lake George-Guffey (Park) 16.6 (14.3)
		Collegiate Academy (Jefferson) 17.1 (21.1)
		Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) 17.4 (17.7)
		Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) 17.6 (19.2)
		Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) 18.8 (19.8)
		Community Involved (Jefferson County) 19.0 (21.1)
		Core Knowledge (Douglas County) 19.3 (18.5)

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Table 2 - Student:Teacher Ratio for Charter Schools (Cont.)

Student-to-Teacher Ratio	Number of Schools	Charter School (Sponsoring District)
Over 20:1	10 (33%)	Renaissance (Douglas County) 20.2 (18.5)
		Lewis Palmer Charter (Lewis Palmer) 20.8 (20.8)
		Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) 20.9 (19.4)
		Stargate (Adams 12) 21.1 (19.8)
		Mountain View (Canon City) 21.3 (17.9)
		The Connect School (Pueblo 70) 22.0 (19.9)
		Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) 23.3 (16.4)
		Littleton Academy (Littleton) 23.7 (18.5)
		Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) 26.0 (17.1)
		Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) 38.0 (18.8)

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1997. Data was not reported for Eagle County Charter School.

Student-to-Teacher Ratio - The Colorado Context

In the fall of 1997, Colorado's student-to-teacher ratio was 18.2, its lowest level since 1987. Colorado's student-to-teacher ratio had been increasing since the early 1980s due to declining revenue and a growing student population. Student-teacher ratios were lower in smaller, rural districts and higher in larger, urban districts.

Student-to-Teacher Ratio - The National Context

Colorado's 1997 student-to-teacher ratio of 18.2 was higher that the estimate of 17.3 for the nation as a whole.

Grade Level

Only five of the charter schools in this study (21%) fit the traditional grade-level configuration of elementary, middle or high schools. Most of the schools offer a program that can serve students continuously from elementary through middle school, from middle school through secondary school, or throughout their public school

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experience. **Almost half of the schools in this study serve elementary or elementary and middle school students.**

Table 3 - Grade Levels Served by Colorado Charter Schools

Grade Levels Served	Number of Schools	Charter Schools (Sponsoring District)
Elementary	4 (12.5%)	Mountain View Core Knowledge (Canon City) - K-4 Roosevelt Edison (Colorado Springs 11) - K-5 Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) - K-6 Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson Cnty) - K-6
Elementary and Middle	13 (40.6%)	Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) - 1-8 Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) - K-8 Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) - K-8 Academy Charter (Douglas County) - K-8 Core Knowledge (Douglas County) - K-8 Renaissance Academy (Douglas County) - K-7 Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed) - K-7 Excel Academy (Jefferson County) - K-8 Lewis Palmer Charter Acad. (Lewis Palmer) - preK-8 Littleton Charter Academy (Littleton) - K-8 Crestone Charter (Moffat Consolidated) - 1-8 Lake George - Guffey (Park) - preK-8 Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork) - K-8
Middle/Jr. High	5 (15.6%)	Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley) - 6-8 Eagle (Eagle County) - 5-9 The Connect School (Pueblo District 70) - 6-8 Swallows Charter Academy (Pueblo 70) - 6-8 Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County) - 7-8
Middle and Secondary	4 (12.5%)	P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)[8] EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) - 6-12 Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County) - 7-12 Alpine Charter School (Summit) - 6-10
Secondary	1 (3.1%)	Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) - 9-12
All School	5 (15.6%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - preK-12 GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) - K-12 Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - K-12 Community Involved (Jefferson County) - preK-12 Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) - K-12

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

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[8] P.S. 1 does not use traditional grade level designations, but serves a population of students who are between 10 and 18 years old.

Grade Levels Served - The Colorado Context

Charter schools were much more likely than other public schools in Colorado to combine elementary and middle school grade levels, middle and secondary school grades levels, and to offer an educational program that serves students in grades K-12. In Colorado, only about 15% of public schools (277 schools out of a total of 1,521) do not fit the traditional grade-level configuration of elementary, middle or secondary schools. In contrast, 68.7% of the charter schools in the study offer programs that fall outside traditional grade-level configurations.

Grade Levels Served - The National Context

Charter schools were much more likely than other public schools to span grades K-8 (17% in charter schools compared to 4% for all public schools in the charter school states).) About 11% of charter schools span grades K-12, compared to 3% of all public schools in the charter states. Nationally, 51% of charter schools fit the traditional grade-level configuration, compared to 78% of all public schools in the sixteen charter states included in the U.S. Department of Education evaluation.[9]

SOURCE OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Of the 32 schools in the 1998 evaluation study, 18 schools maintain data regarding the source of students enrolled in their schools. As the following table depicts, **there is an extremely broad range of experience among the charter schools depending on their size and location. The percentage of students drawn from home schools ranged from 0.4% to 44%. The percentage of students drawn from private schools ranged from 2% to 15%. The percentage of students drawn from other public schools ranged from 51% to 99%.**

TABLE 4: SOURCE OF CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**Enrollment**	**% of students enrolled from home schools**	**% of students enrolled from private schools**	**% of students enrolled from other public schools**
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12)	763	5%	10%	85%
Stargate Charter (Adams 12)	226	1%	2%	97%
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley)	270	2%	8%	90%
Mountain View Charter Academy (Canon City)	149	44%	5%	51%

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[9] *A National Study of Charter Schools - Second Year Report 1998.*

TABLE 4: SOURCE OF CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS (Cont).

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Enrollment	% of students enrolled from home schools	% of students enrolled from private schools	% of students enrolled from other public schools
Cheyenne Mountain Charter (Cheyenne Mountain)	291	30%	10%	60%
GLOBE Charter (Colorado Springs 11)	136	9%	8%	83%
Roosevelt Edison Charter (Colorado Springs 11)	684	0.4%	0%	99.6%
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	162	12%	13%	75%
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	270	8%	10%	82%
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	137	2%	2%	96%
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	259	6%	6%	88%
Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County)	280	2%	2%	96%
Crestone Charter (Moffat Consolidated)	47	44%	0%	56%
Battle Creek Charter (Montezuma Cortez)	26	8%	0%	92%
Lake George - Guffey (Park School District)	193	17%	0%	83%
Pueblo School Arts and Sciences (Pueblo 60)	422	11%	5%	84%
The Connect School (Pueblo 70)	132	3%	15%	82%
Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70)	59	3%	7%	90%

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

Educational Program

The diversity of the educational approaches being offered by Colorado charter schools is apparent from a review of their distinctive components (see Table 5). This diversity meets the intent of the Colorado Charter Schools Act to offer new educational options to students and their parents. The "Core Knowledge" approach, for example, has come to Colorado largely through charter schools.

There has been some debate about whether the educational programs of the charter schools are "innovative." In this regard, it is important to note that the charter schools

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have attributes and offer programs that do not fit within the confines of Table 5. They are particularly responsive to community needs. Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), for example, offers a late afternoon schedule option for students who have not been successful within the confines of the traditional schedule either because of work conflicts or internal body clocks. Academy Charter School (Douglas County) provides a support program to a network of home schools.

Perhaps even more fundamentally, innovation is in the eye of the beholder. Instructional practices that are routine in some districts may be highly innovative in others. Also, a similar reform strategy can be expressed very distinctly in different schools, depending on the school's culture and policy context and on the level of support for reform. Therefore, while the type of educational innovation in charter schools may not be different from those being implemented by conventional schools, the duration and intensity of implementation may be.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the charter schools have plowed new ground in areas other than the educational program. In the areas of governance, parent and community involvement and employment policies, the charter schools, as a group, are operating in ways that are dramatically different than most conventional public schools.

Annenberg Rural Challenge. Four Colorado charter schools, Lake-George Guffey (Park School District), Crestone (Moffat Consolidated School District), Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District) and Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortex School District) are part of the Annenberg Rural Challenge. This foundation-sponsored initiative seeks to help smaller rural schools in the state and around the country re-establish strong connections with their community. The Rural Challenge emphasizes place-based education, such as helping students understand their locale and their relationship to the land, its history and its resources. In addition to providing support to these charter schools, the Rural Challenge program works with other public schools in rural settings in Colorado.

Charter Schools Operated by For-Profit Organizations. The first agreement in Colorado between a school district and a for-profit organization, the Edison Project, to manage a public school, led to the creation of the Roosevelt Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11). Roosevelt Edison is included in this evaluation study. The Edison Project has worked with local districts to open two other charter schools in Colorado that are not included in this study – Emerson-Edison Charter Junior Academy (Colorado Springs District 11) and Edison-Wyatt Charter School (Denver Public Schools).

Table 5: Overview of Distinctive Components of Educational Programs - Schools Opened Fall 1993, Fall 1994

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm of Learners	EXCEL School Durango	Eagle	Collegiate	Comm Involved	Jefferson Elemen	Battle Rock	Pueblo School Arts and Sciences	Connect
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X	X		X			X	x		X	X	
Technology as a major focus						X					X		X
Core Knowledge curriculum	X		X	X			X			X			
Community as classroom		X			X				X		X		X
Individualized learning plans		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Multi-age groupings		X			X				X		X	X	X
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)								X	X			X	
Character instruction			X				X		X	X			
Hands-on/Experiential learning		X	X		X				X		X	X	X
Extended academic day/year							X	X					
Foreign language instruction at all grades		X	X	X		X	X					X	
Block or other non-traditional scheduling			X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Year-Round Calendar					X								
Community Service/Service Learning		X							X			X	

Table 5: Distinctive Components of Educational Programs (Cont) - Schools Opened Fall 1995

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P S 1	Community Prep	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy (Arvada)	Crestone	Aspen Community
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Technology as a major focus									X	
Core Knowledge curriculum	X					X				
Community as classroom			X	X	X		X	X		X
Individualized learning plans		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Multi-age groupings		X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)										
Character instruction	X		X	X		X				X
Hands-on/Experiential learning		X	X		X				X	X
Extended academic day/year	X		X			X		X		
Foreign language instruction at all grades		X			X				X	X
Block or other non-traditional scheduling			X		X	X				
Year-Round Calendar		X						X		
Community Service/Service Learning			X	X	X				X	X

Table 5: Distinctive Components of Educational Programs (Cont) - Schools Opened Fall 1996

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Summit Middle	Roosevelt-Edison	Mt. View Core Know	Jefferson Academy Jr. High	Lewis Palmer Charter Academy	Littleton Academy	Lake George Guffey	Swallows Academy	Alpine Charter
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X					X		X
Technology as a major focus	X	X							
Core Knowledge curriculum			X	X	X	X		X	
Community as classroom									X
Individualized learning plans		X						x	
Multi-age groupings	X	X							
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)	X								
Character instruction	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Hands-on/Experiential learning		X					X		
Extended academic day/year		X		X					
Foreign language instruction at all grades	X	X				X			
Block or other non-traditional scheduling		X							
Year-Round Calendar									
Community Service/Service Learning		X							

Assessment Tools Used by the Charter Schools

As public schools, all charter schools are required to administer the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) in the appropriate content areas and grades. In this evaluation study, the only schools that are reporting CSAP scores are those that offered a 3rd and 4th grade program and that administered the CSAP to more than 16 students during the 1997-98 school year. The CSAP is a **standards-based assessment**, aligned with the state model content standards. For a detailed discussion of the charter schools' CSAP scores, see page 53.

To supplement the CSAP, the charter schools used a variety of assessments, depending on the school's educational approach and performance goals and the requirements of the sponsoring district. No single test can provide a full picture of a student's progress or learning. Assessment experts agree that an assessment program should use an array of tests to measure different dimensions of student learning. In this regard, note that all charter schools used teacher-produced and informal assessments regularly in the classroom in addition to the more formal assessments discussed here.

Table 6 provides an overview of the assessment tools used by charter schools in this study, organized into three categories:

- **Norm-referenced tests** are tests that measure the relative performance of the individual or group by comparison with the performance of other individuals or groups taking the same test.

- **Criterion-referenced tests** are tests whose scores are interpreted by reference to well-defined domains of content or behaviors, rather than by reference to the performance of some other group.

- **Performance assessments** are tests that measure ability by assessing open-ended responses or by asking the respondent to complete a task, produce a response or demonstrate a skill.

Table 6: Overview of District/School Assessments Used by Charter Schools that Opened Fall 1993 or 1994

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm Learners	EXCEL School	Eagle	Comm Involved	Jefferson	Collegiate Academy	Battle Rock	Pueblo School of Arts and Sciences	Connect
Norm-Referenced Tests													
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
California Achievement Test (CAT)		X											
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)				X									
DALT													
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP)													
Durrell Reading Analysis													
Nelson-Denney Reading Test												X	
Terra Nova			X	X								X	X
Tests of Achievement & Proficiency (TAP)													
Criterion-Referenced Tests													
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)			X	X									
Stanford Achievement Test													
Stanford Writing Assessment					X	X							
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment		X	X		X	X	X				X	X	
Woodcock Johnson									X				
High/Scope Child Observation Record													
Performance Assessments													
Individual Learning Programs		X			X		X	X				X	
Portfolios		X			X	X		X	X			X	
Student Exhibits		X					X	X				X	X

Table 6 (Cont.): Overview of District/School Assessments Used by Charter Schools that Opened Fall 1995

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P.S.1	Community Prep	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy	Crestone	Aspen Communit
Norm-Referenced Tests										
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	X		X		X			X		
California Achievement Test (CAT)										
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)		X								
DALT					X					
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP)			X							
Durrell Reading Analysis										
Nelson-Denney Reading Test										
Terra Nova		X								
Tests of Achievement & Proficiency (TAP)				X						
Criterion-Referenced Tests										
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)		X								
Stanford Achievement Test		X				X			X	
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Assessment										
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment	X									
Woodcock Johnson			X							X
High/Scope Child Observation Record										X
Performance Assessments										
Individual Learning Programs			X						X	X
Portfolios		X	X		X					X
Student Exhibits		X	X							X

Table 6 (Cont.): Overview of District/School Assessments Used by Charter Schools that Opened Fall 1996

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Summit Middle School	Roosevelt Edison Charter School	Mountain View Charter Academy	Jefferson Academy Jr High	Lewis Palmer Charter Academy	Littleton Academy	Lake George - Guffey Charter School	Swallows Academy	Alpine Charter School
Norm-Referenced Tests									
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)		X	X	X	X	X	X		
California Achievement Test (CAT)									
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)	X	X							X
DALT									
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP)									
Durrell Reading Analysis							X		
Nelson-Denney Reading Test									
Terra Nova								X	
Tests of Achievement & Proficiency (TAP)									
Criterion-Referenced Tests									
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)									
Stanford Achievement Test								X	
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Assessment							X		
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment		X	X		X				X
Woodcock Johnson									
High/Scope Child Observation Record									
Performance Assessments									
Individual Learning Programs		X						X	
Portfolios		X		X			X		
Student Exhibits							X		

PART IV - CHARACTERISTICS OF COLORADO CHARTER STUDENTS

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 7 shows the percentage of students eligible for free lunch,[10] racial/ethnic minority students, and students eligible for special education services who are served by the 32 charter schools in the study. The table provides a context for this data by showing the sponsoring district's average percentage of these populations as well as the range of percentages for all schools in a particular district.

These figures provide a reasonable basis for broadly assessing the diversity of students in Colorado charter schools compared to other public schools, but they have limitations and should be read with some caution.

- The table shows "0%" in instances where the charter school did not report the relevant data. Also, a school will show "0%" for free lunch eligibility if it does not administer a lunch program, even though it may serve students who are economically disadvantaged. These "0's" bring down the averages.

- The total number of charter school students in our study is small compared to the student enrollment in all public schools (representing approximately 1.1% of the total student population). The percentages among categories could therefore change significantly with only slight alterations in the composition of student enrollment.

- A pattern of racial concentration in a particular school may result from the school's location and does not necessarily suggest a deliberate policy of exclusion. The location of charter schools depends on the willingness of communities and school districts to welcome, or at least support, charter schools in the first few years of their development.

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[10] Free lunch and free and reduced lunch eligibility is a way to estimate the percentage of low-income students. In 1997, a family of four with an annual income of $20,865 or less would qualify for free lunch under the federally-funded lunch program. A family of four with an annual income of $29,693 or less would quality for reduced lunch.

All but two of the charter schools in the study have admission policies that use a lottery or other random process or that enroll students on a first-come, first-served basis.[11] On the surface, at least, there is no evidence of exclusionary practices.

As a group, the charter schools served a population of students that is diverse, but not as diverse as the population served by public schools overall:

- Three schools in the study (9.4%) serve approximately (+ or - 2 percentage points) the same percentage of free lunch-eligible students as their sponsoring district. Another eight schools (25%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. The remaining 19 schools (59%) serve a smaller percentage of free-lunch eligible students than their sponsoring districts. The **percentage of students eligible for free lunch served by the charter schools in this study ranged from 0%** (Cherry Creek Academy, Cherry Creek School District; Renaissance Charter, Douglas County School District; Eagle County Charter School, Eagle County School District; Marble Charter School, Gunnison Watershed School District; Collegiate Academy, Jefferson County School District; Lewis Palmer Charter Academy, Lewis Palmer School District; Battle Rock Charter School, Montezuma Cortez School District; Connect Charter School, Pueblo District 70; Swallows Academy, Pueblo District 70; Aspen Community School, Roaring Fork School District; and Alpine Charter School, Summit School District) **to 44.7%** (Roosevelt Edison Charter School, Colorado Springs District 11).

  The 32 charter schools in this study served 892 students who were eligible for free lunch. This represents 12.4% of the total population (7,213) served by the schools. The state average is 21.9%

- Five schools in the study (16%) serve approximately (+ or - two percentage points) the same percentage of racial/ethnic minority students as their sponsoring districts. Another seven (22%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. The remaining 20 schools (62%) serve a smaller percentage of racial/ethnic minority students than their sponsoring districts. **The percentage of racial/ethnic minority students served by the charter schools in this study ranged from 0%** (Marble Charter School, Gunnison Watershed School District; Alpine Charter School, Summit School District) **to 50%** (Roosevelt Edison Charter School, Colorado Springs District 11.

  The 32 charter schools in this study served 1,371 racial/ethnic minority students. This represents 18.6% of the total population (7,213) served by the schools. The state average is 28.6%

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[11] Stargate Charter School was created to serve the special needs of gifted and talented students. Once potential students are qualified as intellectually and/or academically gifted by applying multiple criteria that reflect demonstrated accomplishment or diagnostic data, the school fills the first hundred slots on a first-come, first-served basis with slots for each racial and gender group set aside based on reported percentages in the district. The final fifty slots are filled by lottery. Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs 11) was created to serve students who have dropped out of school or who meet multiple risk factors.

- Nine schools in the study (28.1%) serve approximately (+ or - two percentage points) the same percentage of special education students as their sponsoring districts. Another eight schools in the study (25%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. The remaining 17 schools (53%) serve a smaller percentage of students of color than their sponsoring districts. **The percentage of special education students served by the charter schools in this study ranged from 0%** (Mountain View Core Knowledge Charter, Canon City School District; Crestone Charter School, Moffat Consolidated School District; Battle Rock Charter School, Montezuma Cortez School District; and Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo District 60) **to 16%** (Community of Learners, Durango District 9-R Marble Charter School, Gunnison Watershed District and Community Involved Charter School, Jefferson County School District).

  The 32 charter schools in this study served 429 students who are eligible for special education services. This represents 6% of the total population (7,213) served by the schools. The state average is 9.93%

A Note About Students "At-Risk"

The preceding discussion on student characteristics does not fully capture the record of the charter schools with respect to their service of students who are educationally "at risk." Anecdotal evidence suggests that charter schools in Colorado (as well as the nation) provide a second chance for a considerable number of students who have not been successful in other educational settings and who are "at-risk" of educational failure. It is impossible to draw any hard conclusions about the total number of "at risk" students being served by the schools in this study, however, because the schools do not define the concept of risk in a uniform way.

Table 7 - Charter Schools and Sponsoring Districts-Student Characteristics

DISTRICT **Charter School**	**% students eligible - free lunch (Range)**	**% racial/ethnic minority students (Range)**	**% students eligible special ed. (Range)**
State of Colorado	***21.9%***	***28.68%***	***9.93%***
Adams 12 Five Star District	*16.2% (0 - 61.7%)*	*25.8% (13.8 -65.5%)*	*10.2% (0 - 30.2%)*
Academy of Charter Schools	18.1%	26.6%	3.9%
Stargate	0.9%	14.6%	1.8%
Boulder Valley School District	*9.6% (0 - 53%)*	*17.3% (4.5 - 64.5%)*	*11.4% (2.3 - 38.8%)*
Summit Middle School	2.6%	4.1%	4.4%
Canon City School District	*21.4% (0 - 40.7%)*	*11.1% (3.0 - 20.5%)*	*9.3% (0 - 15.8%)*
Mountain View Core Knowledge	4%	6%	0%
Cherry Creek School District	*5.6% (0 - 33.6%)*	*18.5% (4.5- 47.0%)*	*10.6% (3.7 - 17.9%)*
Cherry Creek Academy	0%	5.5%	7.5%
Cheyenne Mountain District 12	*2.6% (0- 8.3%)*	*10.6% (7.0-13.9%)*	*6.4% (2.7-11.4%)*
Cheyenne Mountain Charter	7.6%	10.7%	2.7%
Colorado Springs District 11	*23.5% (32.3 - 62.6%)*	*26.9% (7.3 -69.8%)*	*8.9% (0- 67.2%)*
Community Prep Charter	32.8%	40.2%	13.1%
GLOBE	9.6%	23.5%	11.0%
Roosevelt-Edison	44.7%	50%	2.3%
Denver Public Schools	*54.3% (3.1 -91.1%)*	*74.7% (7.5 - 98.1%)*	*10.7% (0 - 24.7%)*
P.S. 1	24.1%	32.7%	13.6%
Douglas County School District	*1.6% (0 -10.3%)*	*7.8% (2.5 - 13.6%)*	*8.4% (0 -24.3%)*
Academy Charter	3.7%	8.5%	8.8%
Core Knowledge	1.9%	3.7%	5.9%
Renaissance Charter	0%	10.2%	8.2%
Durango School District 9-R	*14.9% (4.9 - 34.8%)*	*15.0% (8.1 - 38.5%)*	*8.5% (6.2 - 15.6%)*
Community of Learners	19.5%	20.3%	15.6%
EXCEL School	4.9%	13.0%	13.0%

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Table 7 - Charter Schools and Sponsoring Districts-Student Characteristics (Continued)

DISTRICT Charter School	% students eligible - free lunch (Range)	% racial/ethnic minority students (Range)	% students eligible special ed. (Range)
Eagle County School District	*12.7% (0 - 23.2%)*	*29.3% (7.4 - 40.4%)*	*8.1% (2.9 - 13.4%)*
Eagle County Charter	0%	7.4%	6.2%
Gunnison Watershed District	*5.2% (0 - 10.2%)*	*4.8% (0 - 11.1%)*	*7.5% (4.6 - 33.3%)*
Marble Charter School	0%	0%	15.8%
Jefferson County School District	*10.1% (0 - 53.2%)*	*14.8% (2.4 - 54.5%)*	*8.4% (0 - 18.1%)*
Collegiate Academy	0%	4.4%	13.9%
Community Involved	13.9%	15.1%	16.6%
Excel Academy	1.4%	3.6%	5.8%
Jefferson Academy - Elem	1.8%	6.8%	7.4%
Jefferson Academy Jr. High	3.6%	3.6%	7.4%
Lewis Palmer School District	*3.3% (0 - 10.1%)*	*5.3% (3.9 - 9.3%)*	*8.1% (4.5 - 15.2%)*
Lewis Palmer Charter Acad	0%	9.3%	4.5%
Littleton School District	*8.0% (.8 - 37.1%)*	*9.4% (4.1 - 32.2%)*	*9.8% (4.4 - 14.3%)*
Littleton Academy	3.3%	4.9%	4.4%
Moffat Consolidated No. 2	*32.2% (12.8 - 50.0%)*	*19.6% (7.6 - 31.9%)*	*7.5% (0 - 10.8%)*
Crestone Charter School	12.8%	31.9%	0%
Montezuma Cortez	*36.8% (0 -72.0%)*	*33.5% (12 - 44.0%)*	*10.0% (0 - 28.6%)*
Battle Rock Charter	0%	25.4%	0%
Park County School District	*20.4% (12.4 - 35.8%)*	*4.6% (2.0 - 7.5%)*	*8.8% (8.3 - 9.4%)*
Lake George - Guffey	35.8%	5.7%	8.3%
Pueblo School District 60	*43.5% (17.9 - 83.4%)*	*56.7% (43.8 - 89%)*	*8.3% (0 - 15.7%)*
Pueblo School Arts-Sciences	32.2%	54.3%	0%
Pueblo School District 70	*16.6% (0 - 45.7%)*	*25.1% (7.2 - 44.1%)*	*8.4% (0 - 14.7%)*
Swallows Academy	0%	10.2%	8.5%

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Table 7 - Charter Schools and Sponsoring Districts-Student Characteristics (Continued)

DISTRICT **Charter School**	**% students eligible - free lunch (Range)**	**% racial/ethnic minority students (Range)**	**% students eligible special ed. (Range)**
Roaring Fork School District	*10.8% (0 - 25.1%)*	*18.3% (3.4 - 42.9%)*	*6.5% (0 - 13.2%)*
Aspen Community School	0%	3.4%	6.8%
Summit School District	*5.2% (0 - 8.5%)*	*7.2% (0 - 17.4%)*	*6.8% (0.5 - 8.6%)*
Alpine Charter School	0%	0%	6.5%

Student Characteristics - The Colorado Context

State level data also is reported on Table 7. In 1997, the total public school population included:

- 28.7% racial/ethnic minority students,
- 21.9% students who are eligible for free lunch (28.2% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch) and
- 9.9% students who are eligible for special education services.

Student Characteristics - The National Context

The 1998 U.S. Department of Education evaluation of charter schools reports that:

- 60% of the charter schools in the 16 states in the study are not racially distinct from their surrounding districts.
- Of the 34% of charter schools that serve predominantly low-income children, 63% serve a distinctly higher percentage of poor children than their district average. About half of the charter schools primarily serve children who are not low-income. 51% of these schools are similar to the surrounding districts in terms of the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.
- Charter schools serve, on average, a lower proportion of students with disabilities than their surrounding districts (8% versus 11%).
- Of the 16 states in the national study, California, Colorado and Arizona have a somewhat higher school percentage of white students in charter schools than in public schools overall.

DISCIPLINE

National and state polls continue to underscore the high priority that parents, staff and students give to issues related to school discipline and safe learning environments. The rate of suspensions and expulsions in a school is a commonly used indicator to measure school climate. The suspension and expulsion rate is a function of many factors, including the strictness of a school's discipline code, the population the school

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serves and the school's capacity (including adequate resources) to provide alternative learning opportunities for disruptive students.

Legislation enacted in 1993 defines grounds for suspension or expulsion from public schools. These grounds include possessing a deadly weapon, selling a drug or controlled substance, committing a robbery or assault, disobedience and persistent defiance of proper authority, defacing school property, behavior on or off school property which is detrimental to the welfare or safety of pupils or of school personnel, and repeated interference with a school's ability to provide educational opportunities to other students.

The following table provides the suspension and expulsion rates for the charter schools in this study, in the context of district averages (and ranges) and the state average. **Twelve schools (43%) in the study exceeded the district average in number of suspensions. Another five schools (18%) had an a suspension rate approximately the same as the district average. Eleven schools (39%) had a suspension rate that fell below the average rate in their sponsoring district.**

With respect to expulsion, four of 28 (14%) reporting schools in this study had an expulsion rate that exceeded the district average, the remaining schools (86%) had expulsion rates below the district average.

TABLE 8: Suspension and Expulsion Rate (and Ranges) for State of Colorado, Sponsoring Districts and Colorado Charter Schools, 1997

DISTRICT **Charter School**	**Enrollment**	**Suspension Rate (Range)**	**Expulsion Rate (Range)**
State of Colorado		***7.5%***	***0.3%***
Adams 12 Five Star District		*8.6% (0 - 25.1%)*	*0.04% (0 - 1.8%)*
Academy of Charter Schools	763	24%	0.3%
Stargate	226	3.2%	0.0%
Boulder Valley School District		*4.6% (0.2 - 21.2%)*	*0.3% (0 - 1.1%)*
Summit Middle School	270	0.7%	0.0%
Canon City School District		*8.4% (0.9 - 26.3%)*	*0.3% (0 - 0.9%)*
Mountain View Core Know.	149	1.3%	0%
Cherry Creek School District		*8.4% (0.2 - 38.7%)*	*0.2% (0.0 - 0.8%)*
Cherry Creek Academy	440	4.6	0%
Cheyenne Mountain District 12		*4.1% (0.4 - 8.9%)*	*0.1% (0.0 - 0.4%)*
Cheyenne Mountain Charter	291	0.4%	0.0%

TABLE 8: Suspension and Expulsion Rate (and Ranges) for State of Colorado, Sponsoring Districts and Colorado Charter Schools, 1997 (Continued)

DISTRICT **Charter School**	**Enrollment**	**Suspension Rate (Range)**		**Expulsion Rate (Range)**	
Colorado Springs District 11		*9.5%*	*(0.3 - 42.6%)*	*1.1%*	*(0.0 - 5.1%)*
Community Prep Charter	122	38.3%		0.9%	
GLOBE	136	38.3%		1.9%	
Roosevelt-Edison	821	20.1%		0.8%	
Denver Public Schools		*10.3%*	*(0.4 - 43.2%)*	*0.2%*	*(0.0 - 1.8%)*
P.S. 1	162	0.6%		0.0%	
Douglas County School District		*4.3%*	*(0.1 - 20.5%)*	*0.1%*	*(0.0 - 1.0%)*
Academy Charter	353	4.2%		0.0%	
Core Knowledge	270	1.5%		0.0%	
Renaissance Charter	255	2.5%		0.0%	
Durango School District 9-R		*2.6%*	*(2.0 - 16.8%)*	*0.6%*	*(0.0 - 2.4%)*
Community of Learners	128	16.8%		2.4%	
EXCEL School	123	8.9%		0.9%	
Eagle County School District		*3.5%*	*(0.2 - 15.4%)*	*0.1%*	*(0.0 - 0.6%)*
Eagle County Charter	162	10.3		0.8%	
Gunnison Watershed District		*6.1%*	*(5.2 - 10.0%)*	*0.1%*	*(0.0 - 0.3%)*
Marble Charter School	19	not reported		not reported	
Jefferson County School District		*5.9%*	*(0.2 - 38.1%)*	*0.3%*	*(0.0 - 2.6%)*
Collegiate Academy	137	16.4%		0.0%	
Community Involved	259	11.0%		0.0%	
Excel Academy	138	7.3%		0.0%	
Jefferson Academy - Elem	280	0.4%		0.0%	
Jefferson Academy Jr. High	56	3.5%		0.0%	
Lewis Palmer School District		*4.7%*	*(0.2 - 10.2%)*	*0.5%*	*(0.0 - 1.4%)*
Lewis Palmer Charter Acad	268	3.2%		0.0%	

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TABLE 8: Suspension and Expulsion Rate (and Ranges) for State of Colorado, Sponsoring Districts and Colorado Charter Schools, 1997 (Continued)

DISTRICT Charter School	Enrollment	Suspension Rate (Range)	Expulsion Rate (Range)
Littleton School District		*4.4% (0.2 - 12.2%)*	*0.1% (0.0 - 0.6%)*
Littleton Academy	450	1.3	0.0%
Moffat Consolidated No. 2		*1.5%*	*0.0%*
Crestone Charter School	47	not reported	not reported
Montezuma Cortez		*8.7% (0.8 - 23.2%)*	*0.8% (0.0 - 1.6%)*
Battle Rock Charter	26	not reported	not reported
Park County School District		*11.4% (4.0 - 37.2%)*	*0.5% (0.0 - 2.3%)*
Lake George - Guffey	193	4.0%	0.0%
Pueblo School District 60		*11.2% (0.8 - 54.4%)*	*0.2% (0.0 - 1.5%)*
Pueblo Sch. Arts/Sciences	422	10.8	0.0%
Pueblo School District 70		*8.8% (0.7 - 22.7%)*	*0.7% (0.0 - 7.1%)*
Connect Charter School	132	not reported	not reported
Swallows Academy	59	15.1%	0.0%
Roaring Fork School District		*5.7% (1.7 - 16.2%)*	*0.4% (0.0 - 1.6%)*
Aspen Community School	147	5.7%	0.0%
Summit School District		*4.9% (7.7 - 57.1%)*	*0.1% (0.0 - 4.1%)*
Alpine Charter School	46	57.1%	4.1%

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education

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PART V - CHARACTERISTICS OF COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOL TEACHERS

Introduction

The evaluation team asked the directors of each of the 32 charter schools participating in this study to distribute a four page questionnaire to every teacher. Twenty-five of the 32 schools in the study submitted completed teacher questionnaires. The return rate for two of the schools was less than 80% and, therefore, their surveys were not included in the study. The data analyzed in this section was drawn from questionnaires completed by 248 teachers from 23 schools. This effort represents one of the most thorough statewide surveys of the views of teachers in charter schools.

The questionnaire was developed by the Hudson Institute and the Brookings Institute in connection with a national study of charter schools and used with their permission. The evaluation team gratefully acknowledges their work. The national survey conducted by the Hudson Institute in 1997 included 521 teachers in Colorado and nine other states.

Except where noted, the data source for the information discussed in this section is the completed teacher questionnaires.

Salary, Education and Experience

The average teacher salary for the 32 charter schools included in this evaluation study is $26,802. This amount was significantly lower than the average teacher salary for the State of Colorado ($37,240).

The great majority of charter schools in the evaluation study employed teachers with less experience and who held fewer post-baccalaureate degrees than teachers employed by other public schools. For the 32 schools in the study, 27.7% of charter school teachers held MA degrees. The average number of years of experience of teachers employed by the charter schools in the study was 5.7. Approximately 47% of all public schools teachers in Colorado hold MA degrees. The average Colorado teacher has 13 years of experience.

Table 9 - Teacher Characteristics - Colorado Charter Schools

Charter School - Total Enrollment (Sponsoring District)	Total FTE (Teachers)	Average Salary	Percent with MA Degrees	Average Years of Experience
Academy of Charter School - 763 (Adams Five Star)	40.5	$23,151	4.9%	1.4
Stargate Charter School 226 (Adams Five Star)	10.7	$33,397	41.7%	1.0
Summit Middle School 270 (Boulder Valley School District)	17.0	$31,176	33.3%	2.6
Mountain View Charter 149 (Canon City School District)	7.0	$25,940	25%	4.5
Cherry Creek Academy 440 (Cherry Creek School District)	25.3	$27,205	48.1%	8.1
Cheyenne Mountain 291 (Colorado Springs District 12)	13.9	$23,644	26.7%	8.1
Community Prep 122 (Colorado Springs District 11)	3.2	$26,824	40.0%	3.0
GLOBE Charter School 136 (Colorado Springs District 11)	11.2	$20,223	38.5%	10.3
Roosevelt Edison Charter 821 (Colorado Springs District 11)	57.8	$25,970	20.6%	5.8
P.S. 1 162 (Denver Public Schools)	13.0	$27,908	53.8%	3.4
Academy Charter School 353 (Douglas County)	24.7	$25,661	35.7%	7.7
Core Knowledge Charter 270 (Douglas County)	14	$25,573	7.1%	8.3
Rennaissance Charter 255 (Douglas County)	12.6	$29,459	15.4%	7.7
Community of Learners 128 (Durango 9-R)	5.5	$26,206	0%	4.5
EXCEL School 123 (Durango 9-R)	9.2	$23,726	27.3%	5.8
Eagle County Charter 162 (Eagle County)	did not report	did not report	did not report	did not report
Marble Charter School 19 (Gunnison Watershed)	2.0	$29,500	50.0%	3.5
Collegiate Academy 137 (Jefferson County)	8.0	$26,848	25%	4.0
Community Involved 259 (Jefferson County)	13.6	$28,632	28.6%	7.1
Excel Academy 138 (Jefferson County)	9.0	$26,043	0	1.0
Jefferson Academy Elementary and Jr. High 336 (Jefferson County)	16.9	$29,194	15%	9.1
Lewis Palmer Charter Acad. 268 (Lewis Palmer School District)	12.9	$23,954	20%	2.6
Littleton Academy 450 (Littleton School District)	19.0	$31,006	15.8%	3.9
Crestone Charter School 47 (Moffat Consolidated)	3.0	$22,500	66.7%	4.7
Battle Rock Charter School 26 (Montezuma Cortez)	1.0	$33,900	0%	12.0

Table 9 - Teacher Characteristics - Colorado Charter Schools (Continued)

Charter School - Total Enrollment (Sponsoring District)	Total FTE (Teachers)	Average Salary	Percent with MA Degrees	Average Years of Experience
Lake George - Guffey 193 (Park School District)	11.6	$29,034	28.6%	8.1
Pueblo Arts-Sciences 422 (Pueblo 60)	24.0	$30,319	33.3%	10.1
Connect Charter School 132 (Pueblo 70)	6.0	$23,890	0%	2.2
Swallows Academy 59 (Pueblo 70)	4.0	$20,500	25%	9.8
Aspen Community Charter 147 (Roaring Fork School District)	8.0	$26,676	55.6%	8.6
Alpine Charter 46 (Summit School District)	4.0	$26,000	50%	3.0

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education

Certification

Approximately 94% of the charter schools in this study received a waiver of the Colorado Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act. On a statewide basis, however, the overall impact of these waivers on the employment of non-certificated teachers has been fairly minimal.

Based on responses from the teacher survey, **63% of charter school teachers were certified in Colorado, 11% were certified in another state but not in Colorado, and another 16% were actively working on certification in Colorado. Only 10% were not certified and were not actively working toward certification.**

Nationally, 62% of charter school teachers are certified and an additional 17% are working toward certification.[12]

Union Membership

Of the charter school teachers who responded to the questionnaire (248 teachers from 23 charter schools), **only 5% were current members of their local teachers association**, compared to about 80% statewide. Nationally, one quarter of the teachers in the charter schools are members of the teachers' union.[13]

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[12] Vanourek, Greg, Bruno V. Manno, Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Louann A. Bierlein. *Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers and Parents.* Washington D.C.: The Hudson Institute. 1997.

[13] Ibid.

Why Teachers Choose to Teach in Charter Schools

When asked "How big a factor were the following in your decision to teach in this school?", the top choices for the teachers were: **the school's educational philosophy (83%), the opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues (67%), good administrators (54%), wanted to teach in (and help shape) a new school (52%), and committed parents (50%). Almost half of the teachers reported that class size and having eager/good students were also big factors in their decision to teach in the charter school.**

Least commonly cited as a "big factor" were convenient location (27%), school less influenced by union contracts (17%), safety (15%), attractive compensation (8%) and difficulty finding other employment (9%).

These responses and percentages were remarkably similar to the national survey of charter school teachers conducted by the Hudson Institute.

The idea that a school's philosophy and working with colleagues who share a similar philosophy can be the top reasons for choosing to work in a charter school is revealing. The distinctive missions of charter schools appear to have been a powerful draw for many teachers. The fact that so few teachers had found it difficult to find other suitable positions says something about the number of able teachers who are eager to work in charter schools.

Table 10: Key Factors In Teachers' Decisions to Teach in Charter School

	Big Factor	Somewhat A Factor	Not a Factor
School's educational philosophy	83%	15%	2%
Opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues	67%	27%	6%
Good administrators	54%	34%	12%
Wanted to teach in/help shape new school	52%	34%	14%
Committed parents	50%	39%	11%
Class size	49%	33%	18%
Eager/good students	47%	35%	18%
School size	41%	33%	26%
Teachers have more authority	35%	38%	27%
Less bureaucracy	30%	37%	33%
Convenient location	27%	32%	41%
Less influenced by union contracts	17%	29%	55%
Safety	15%	32%	53%
Attractive compensation/benefits package	9%	34%	57%
Difficulty finding other suitable positions	8%	23%	69%

How Teachers Grade Their Charter Schools

The survey asked teachers "How satisfied are you with specific features of this school and your experience in it?" The answers indicated a **high degree of satisfaction with**

such elements as fellow teachers (97% somewhat or very satisfied), the educational philosophy of the school (98%), the school size (91%), administrators (89%) and students (93%). Over half were very satisfied with all of these five features.

Over 70% also were satisfied with teacher participation in school decisions (80%), parental involvement (73%), the governing board (75%), instructional materials (79%) and staff development (75%). Concerns have been expressed about whether new charter schools have the needed instructional materials and provide sufficient staff development. For the most part, survey responses suggest that teachers are satisfied about these two features of their schools.

The struggles charter schools have had finding adequate locations are well known. Lack of start-up money, as well as the fact that so few Colorado charters are conversions from pre-existing schools, are among the reasons why so many charters are located in trailers and aging shopping malls. This is one reason, no doubt, why the survey found so many charter school teachers expressing little satisfaction with their physical facilities. The number of teachers not too satisfied or quite dissatisfied was greater than those who were satisfied with their facilities. Teachers also indicated a low level of satisfaction in their relations with the local school district and with the teachers' union.

Table 11: Teacher Satisfaction with Charter School

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Uncertain	Not too Satisfied	Quite Dissatisfied
Fellow teachers	70%	27%	1%	2%	0%
Educational philosophy	69%	29%	2%	0%	0%
School size	61%	30%	3%	5%	2%
Administrators	60%	29%	6%	3%	2%
Students	53%	40%	2%	5%	0.4%
The challenge of starting a new school	46%	39%	13%	3%	0%
Teacher participation in school decisions	41%	39%	10%	6%	4%
Parental involvement	37%	36%	7%	16%	4%
Governing board	36%	39%	17%	6%	3%
Instructional materials	35%	44%	6%	15%	1%
Staff development	32%	43%	14%	10%	1%
Non-teaching responsibilities	26%	42%	19%	13%	1%
Fringe benefits	23%	40%	17%	15%	5%
Salary level	20%	42%	10%	20%	9%
Relations with local community	17%	43%	29%	11%	0.4%
Relations with local school district	8%	30%	33%	25%	5%
Physical Facilities	8%	34%	11%	34%	13%
Relations with teachers' union	7%	25%	39%	24%	6%

Overall, the level of satisfaction evident in the figures above is supported by the fact that when asked if they planned to return to the charter school, 74% of those who responded said they hoped so. Another 14% said they were not sure. Only 12% said they hoped to be elsewhere.

When asked "What would you be doing this year if you weren't teaching in this school?" some teachers gave more than one answer. Of their total answers, 34% said teaching in a regular public school, 18% said teaching in a private school and 17% said teaching in another charter school. The rest – a somewhat surprising 31% -- said "other" and they gave a wide range of responses of what that might be. These figures reflect those found in Hudson's national survey, where 27% of the respondents also chose "other."

Hudson's commentary in its 1997 study on this finding seems relevant to Colorado as well: "Apparently, charter school teachers are an unconventional bunch. Over a quarter say they'd be doing something other than teaching if they weren't teaching in a charter school. This suggests that charter schools are tapping into sources of instructional horsepower not attracted to more conventional schools."[14]

Teachers' Views on Charter Schools' Success

The survey also asked teachers to what extent they felt their school had succeeded in addressing a number of key areas found in effective schools. The response was quite positive. **Two thirds or more felt their school has had much success in developing a strong curriculum and powerful teaching methods; building a high quality, high performing staff; raising student achievement; and having a positive influence on the community.** On eighteen out of twenty areas, at least 90% of the teachers felt their schools had shown some or much success. **The two areas where teachers saw the least success had to do with integrating technology with the curriculum and providing teachers adequate time for preparation and overall staff development.** Teachers also indicated some concern about how well their school had been able to retain students and how smoothly the school was working as an organization.

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[14] Ibid.

Table 12: Charter School Teachers' Evaluation of School's Success

	Much Success	Some Success	Little or No Success
Developing a strong curriculum and powerful teaching methods	75%	24%	1%
Building a high quality, high performing staff	73%	27%	0%
Raising student achievement	68%	32%	1%
Having a positive influence on education in this community	67%	32%	2%
Providing for children's and staff's safety	65%	33%	2%
Providing an excellent educational alternative for children who need it	65%	35%	1%
Setting and maintaining high academic standards	65%	35%	1%
Using suitable means of assessing student performance	59%	40%	1%
Maintaining discipline and order	57%	42%	1%
Involving teachers in decision-making	53%	40%	7%
Involving parents	53%	43%	4%
Educating hard-to-educate children	47%	52%	1%
Giving teachers the instructional supplies and materials they need	43%	49%	8%
Attracting the kinds of students the school hoped to have	41%	54%	6%
Integrating technology with curriculum	41%	44%	15%
Providing necessary training and staff development for teachers	40%	53%	8%
Obtaining necessary resources	39%	55%	6%
Retaining students	38%	54%	8%
Running smoothly as an organization	35%	59%	6%
Giving teachers adequate preparation time	32%	49%	19%

Finally, the survey asked several open-ended questions. The following narrative provides a brief overview of the teachers' responses. A more complete listing and analysis of this data is included in the Appendix to this report.

What is the biggest difference between this school and your previous one(s)?

Teachers noted over twenty different areas where they saw large differences between their charter schools and the schools they had worked in previously. The most common responses (in order of frequency) were:

- curriculum
- administration and staff
- focus/challenging academics
- parent involvement/support
- administrative support
- class size.

What is your greatest source of personal/professional satisfaction at this school?

The two areas that provided the greatest source of satisfaction for teachers at charter schools were the students themselves, and the roles teachers are allowed to play. Other frequent responses included: fellow teachers, administrators, curriculum, organization/whole school.

What is your greatest source of discontent at this school?

The top concerns listed by teachers, in order of frequency, are:

- physical space/facility/resources
- lack of time/heavy work load
- parents
- leadership/board
- staff/teachers
- salary/benefits.

What is the school's most serious unsolved problem?

Concerns about facility/physical space/building needs again topped the list. A good many teachers also spoke of their concerns about a variety of leadership issues, such as the relationship between the school's governing board and administrator and micro-management on the part of the governing board. Other common responses included. funding/financial issues, consistency in retention and consistency in mission, time demands and workload.

PART VI - GOVERNANCE OF AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Governance

Colorado charter schools must propose a governance structure in their application. The sponsoring district approves this structure, either as submitted or as modified through negotiations, in the charter school contract.

The charter school governing bodies had authority over curriculum, personnel, budget and all other aspects of the school, under the terms and conditions of the charter contract with the sponsoring district. Almost all charter schools in the study employed an administrator (called a dean, educational director, lead teacher, principal) who was responsible for making day-to-day operational decisions.

Ten of the 32 schools (31%) that provided information about board composition have a membership comprised of parents, school staff and community members. Another ten schools (31%) have a board comprised of parents and school staff. Six schools (19%) have a board comprised of parents and community members. Four schools (13%) have a board comprised of parents only. Two schools (6%) were governed by a body other than a school-based governing board.

Parents held a majority on the governing boards in 27 of the 32 schools (84%) in the study. Table 13 summarizes the various board compositions being used by the charter schools in this study.

Table 13 - Composition of Charter School Governing Boards

Governing Board Membership	Number of Schools	Charter Schools (Sponsoring District)
Parents/Staff/Community	*10 (32%)*	
- With equal representation among parents and staff		Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) Community Involved (Jefferson County)
- With a parent majority		GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) Renaissance (Douglas County) Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) Excel Academy (Jefferson County) Lake George-Guffey (Park) Connect (Pueblo 70) Aspen Community (Roaring Fork)
- With community majority		P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
Parents/Staff	*10 (32%)*	
- With a parent majority		Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) Summit (Boulder Valley) Core Knowledge (Douglas County) Eagle County (Eagle County) Marble (Gunnison Watershed) Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson) Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson) Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer) Littleton Academy (Littleton) Alpine Charter (Summit)
Parents/Community - With a parent majority	*6 (19%)*	Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain 12) EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County) Crestone (Moffat Consolidated) Swallows (Pueblo 70)
Parents Only	*4 (13%)*	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) Academy Charter School (Douglas County) Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) Mountain View Charter (Canon City)
Other[15]	*2 (6%)*	Roosevelt-Edison (Colorado Springs 11) Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11)

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools.

Governance issues can be problematic as charter school communities work to strike the right balance of responsibilities between policy-making boards and on-site administrators. The transition of leadership from the charter school founders (often a parent or community group) to the professional staff also can be difficult. Table 14 presents the response of the charter schools to the following questions that may reflect these dynamics:

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[15] The national Edison Project sets policy related to school design and major program parameters for Roosevelt Edison. A school-based advisory group helps set budget priorities and implement local programs related to public relations, student achievement, fund raising and school events. Community Prep Charter School is operated by the Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs, under the authority of the Colorado Springs City Council.

- Has the structure of the school's governing board changed since the school opened?

  17 of 31 schools (55%) have changed the structure of their governing board since the school opened.

- Does the school provide training for members of its governing board?

  Only 4 schools (13%) provided training for their board members. Another school (3%) provided "minimal" training.

- How many board members have left the governing board before their terms expired since the school's opening?

  The majority of the schools have had at least one board member resign from the board before his/her term expired, since the opening of the school.

- How many principals (sometimes referred to as deans, managers, lead administrators, executive directors) has the school employed since its opening?

  The majority of the schools in this study have experienced a turn-over in their chief administrator (principals, deans) position since opening. Ten of the 31 schools (32%) have employed three or more chief administrators.

Table 14 - Changes in Board Structure, Board and Principal Turnover, and Availability of Training for Board Members

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Change In Board Structure?	Provide Training For Board Members?	# Of Board Members Who Left Before Term Expired Since School Opened	# Of Principals Employed Since School Opened
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	yes	no	4	2
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	yes	no	2	1-Elementary 3 - Middle
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley)	yes	no	0	4
Mountain View Charter (Canon City)	no	no	0	1
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	yes	no	8	3
Cheyenne Mountain (Colorado Springs District 12)	no	yes	0	2
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	not[16] applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	no	yes	3	2
Roosevelt (Colorado Springs District 11)	no	no	0	2
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	yes	no	0	1
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	yes	no	2	4
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	no	no	1	4
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	no	no	2	same 2 since start-up
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	no	yes	1	3
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	yes	no	not reported	4
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	yes	no	not reported	2
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	yes	no	2	2
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	no	no	2	2
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	yes	yes	1	3
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	yes	no	6	4
Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County)	no	no	0	1
Jefferson Academy Junior High (Jefferson County)	no	no	0	1
Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)	yes	no	3	2

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[16] Community Prep Charter School is operated by the Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs, under the authority of the Colorado Springs City Council.

Table 14 - Changes in Board Structure, Board and Principal Turnover, and Availability of Training for Board Members (Continued)

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Change In Board Structure?	Provide Training For Board Members?	# Of Board Members Who Left Before Term Expired Since School Opened	# Of Principals Employed Since School Opened
Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)	no	no	1	2
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	yes	no	1	2
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	no	no	4	1
Lake George - Guffey Charter (Park School District)	yes	minimal	9	2
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	yes	no	2	2
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	no	no	0	1
Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70)	yes	no	2	2
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	yes	no	0	1
Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)	no	no	0	3

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

Parent Involvement

It is not an overstatement to say that without extensive parent leadership and commitment, the great majority of charter schools in this evaluation study would not have opened their doors and would not be operating at their current level. This is not to say that all charter school parents can and want to participate. But many do and at high levels of responsibility and commitment.

The implications of creating new ways to engage parents are significant. Research has shown that parental involvement has a profound effect on student achievement. Students whose parents are involved in their education are more enthusiastic and confident learners and achieve at higher levels. Similarly, schools where parents are involved are more effective at meeting the needs of all students.[17]

Table 15 is designed to provide some insight into the extent and depth of parent involvement. It has been fairly common to see greater parent involvement in the first year of operation due to the many additional demands associated with opening the school.

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[17] Henderson, Ann T. and Nancy Beda, eds. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement.* Washington D.C.: Center for Law and Education. 1996.

Table 15 - Parent Involvement in Charter Schools

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**Enrollment**	**96-97 Total Hours** **% Who Volunteer**	**97-98 Total Hours** **% Who Volunteer**	**Administers Parent Satisfaction Survey?**
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	783	19,000 99+	20,995 67%	yes
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	226	36,000 not reported	32,000 75%	yes
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley)	270	18,000 49%	15,000 49%	yes
Mountain View Charter (Canon City)	149	11,380 100%	11,661 100%	yes
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	440	not reported 95%	12,000 not reported	yes
Cheyenne Mountain Academy (Cheyenne Mountain Dist. 12)	291	4,500 23%	5,000 50%	yes
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	122	not applicable	not applicable	yes
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	136	16,000 not reported	2,000 25%	yes
Roosevelt (Colorado Springs District 11)	821	4,700 not reported	6,000 not reported	yes
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	162	not reported	doesn't track 50%	yes
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	353	8,500 80%	8,100 80%	yes
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	270	7,760 94%	6,500 95%	yes
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	255	13,676 96%	10,302 98%	yes
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	128	5,017 81%	3,323 73%	yes
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	123	2,086 72%	not reported	yes
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	162	4,500 60%	5,300 80%	yes
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	19	10-12/week 70%	not reported 100%	no
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	136	not reported	3,066 85%	yes
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	259	1,200 20-25%	1,200 25%	yes
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	138	8,878 100%	7,333 100%	yes
Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County)	280	9,121 50%	10,710 75%	yes
Jefferson Academy Junior High (Jefferson County)	56	not reported	1,927 50%	yes
Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)	268	not reported	10,000 89%	yes
Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)	450	21,700 75%	12,943 75%	yes

Table 15 - Parent Involvement in Charter Schools (Continued)

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**Enrollment**	**96-97 Total Hours % Who Volunteer**	**97-98 Total Hours % Who Volunteer**	**Administers Parent Satisfaction Survey?**
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	47	1,520 100%	not reported 100%	yes
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	26	300 7%	1,000 20%	yes
Lake George - Guffey Charter (Park School District)	193	not reported	2,000 50%	yes - biannual
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	422	16,870 97%	14,132 97%	yes
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	132	less than 100 5%	200 10%	no
Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70)	59	990 40%	1,500 66%	yes
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	147	2,000+ 30%	40 hrs/week 15%	yes
Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)	46	45 hrs/parent 90%	45 hrs+/parent 98%	yes

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

Parent Satisfaction

All but two of the 32 schools included in this study (94%) regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey. The surveys have the potential to contribute to accountability in at least two ways. First, they provide useful feedback to the schools from parents on a regular basis. Second, they offer an important source of information that potential patrons of a charter school can review as one measure of the school's effectiveness.

To gain more insight into the issue of parent satisfaction, the evaluation team asked the 32 charter schools participating in this evaluation study to submit the form and results of their most recent parent questionnaire. Twelve schools provided the requested information. A school-by-school analysis of the parent surveys is included in the Appendix.

The idea of conducting a parent survey certainly is not unique to charter schools. But charter schools tend to ask questions that are more directly tied in with the school's particular mission rather than a set of generic questions. The parent surveys administered by the charter schools in this study included questions regarding:

- parent satisfaction with the educational program in specific content areas.
- how well parents are informed about what their child is being taught, how their child is being taught and how progress is being assessed.
- instructional effectiveness.
- governing board effectiveness.
- administrative staff effectiveness.
- amount/quality of homework.

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- school climate (e.g. "my child likes to come to school," "my child has positive relationships with peers").
- appropriate level of challenge for their children.
- satisfaction with the amount of time teachers spend with students.
- extent to which school reinforces values taught at home.
- extent to which school provides opportunities to challenge advanced students.
- effectiveness of specific communication strategies employed by the school.
- school's effectiveness at meeting parent needs and family needs.

Some charter schools also used the parent survey as another opportunity to urge parent involvement in the school and to identify potential barriers to parent participation and innovative strategies for getting more parents involved.

Parents in the twelve studies analyzed for this study expressed a very high level of satisfaction. **The percentage of parents who agreed that the school meets the needs of their children or is a good fit for their children ranged from 85% to 100%.** Overall, the survey responses also reflected a high level of parent satisfaction in terms of communication with the school.

A common theme or issue related to parent concerns did not emerge from the evaluators' analysis of twelve parent surveys. At one school, parents expressed concern about discipline or dress code, at another about the governing board or director, and at another about the quality of the science curriculum or the foreign language program. In short, no pattern of parent concern or low parent satisfaction with the charter schools was evident from this review.

Parent Satisfaction - The National Context

On a national level, in 1997 the Hudson Institute released its two-year study of charter schools, concluding that "satisfaction levels are wide and deep." The study of nearly 9,000 charter school parents, teacher and students in grades five and above found:

- Charter schools are havens for children who had bad educational experiences elsewhere.
- Charter schools are very popular with their primary constituents: students, parents and teachers. Families and teachers are seeking out charter schools primarily for educational reasons: high academic standards, small classes, a focus on teaching and learning, compatible educational philosophies and innovative approaches to education.
- Satisfaction levels are highest for all three groups when it comes to educational matters and lowest when it comes to non-educational issues (food, facility, sports, etc.) indicating that charters are spending their limited resources on the basics.[18]

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[18] *Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers and Parents.*

Part VII - STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY DATA

Overview

The Charter Schools Act requires that a charter school's application articulate the school's performance standards for students and measurable objectives for student growth. The Act also requires the application to spell out the methods that the charter school will use to assess and report on student progress. In Colorado, the discretion to approve a charter school's performance goals and its plan for assessing and reporting the academic progress of students lies with individual sponsoring districts, not a single chartering organization. Not surprisingly, then, these plans and methods vary broadly among the charter schools.

Some charter schools in this study developed applications that contain very specific performance standards and measurable objectives related to student performance. The applications from other schools contain goals and objectives that are more qualitative, and less susceptible to easy measurement.

The accountability picture is made more complex because the goals and standards set out in the charter schools' applications are regularly supplemented by the school improvement planning process that all public schools (including charter schools) must complete under state law. Again, sponsoring districts use different processes and formats for the school improvement planning process. They apply different criteria and levels of scrutiny to their expectations for or review of charter schools' plans.

This diversity in approach promotes the values of innovation and autonomy stated in the Act and is consistent with Colorado's strong tradition of local control in decisions related to public education. This very diversity, however, makes comparisons between charter schools and other public schools problematic.

To provide accountability data relative to the performance of charter schools and their students within this charter school model, this evaluation looks at five types of information:

- **Scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program.** As CSAP continues to expand to include new subjects and grade levels, it offers a promising tool both for charting the progress of charter schools over time, and for comparing their performance to the performance of other public schools. Presently, CSAP scores are available only for those charter schools that offer 3rd and 4th grade programs and that are large enough to administer the test to more than 16 students in each grade.

This report presents the CSAP scores of charter schools within the context of: (1) average scores for their sponsoring districts and (2) average scores for one or two other public schools in the district that serve a roughly comparable student population in terms of racial/ethnic composition, poverty and special education.

- **Schools of Excellence/Challenger Schools Designation.** All public schools in Colorado, including charter schools, have an opportunity to pursue special designation as a School of Excellence or a Challenger School based on a commitment to accountability and a record of performance.
- **Individual School Profiles.** The profiles are an individualized record of progress that present the results of various assessments administered by the school as well as other indicators of the school's performance against its own performance goals over time.
- **Market Based Indicators.** As schools of choice, charter schools can be evaluated, in part by the demand for their programs and the satisfaction of those they serve. The school profiles, therefore, contain data about the schools' waiting list, rates of parent involvement and satisfaction and the re-enrollment rate.
- **Renewal.** Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, the renewal process is the ultimate tool of accountability. The renewal of a charter by a sponsoring district signals the district's satisfaction that the school is complying with the terms and conditions of the charter.

Colorado Student Assessment Program

Background

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly adopted a standards-driven system of education with the passage of H.B. 1313. This legislation, which enjoyed strong bipartisan support, requires all local school districts to establish clearly defined content **standards**. Standards are statements of what students should know and be able to do in each major content area at various points in their academic careers. The law allows each district to establish its own standards, but these standards must be as rigorous as – that is, "meet or exceed" – a set of model content standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is a statewide single point-in-time **assessment**, aligned with the state model content standards, that covers limited grades and subjects each year. The state assessment program began in April, 1997, testing all fourth grade students in reading and writing. In Spring 1998, fourth grade reading and

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assessments will be added progressively: seventh grade reading and writing in Spring 1999; fifth grade math in Fall 1999; Eighth grade math and science in Spring 2000; tenth grade reading, writing and math in Spring 2001.

CSAP results are reported using four performance levels:

- Unsatisfactory
- Partially proficient – does not meet the standards
- Proficient - meets the standards
- Advanced - exceeds the standards.

Public reporting of CSAP results focuses on the percentage of students who score at the proficient level or above.

In 1998, the Colorado General Assembly enacted legislation that requires the State Board of Education to implement a school **accreditation** process focused on student achievement results as measured by standards-based assessments. Each school district must enter into an accreditation contract with the State Board of Education that defines standards, goals and requirements to be met by the school district over the term of the contract. Failure to achieve the standards, goals and requirements set forth in the accreditation contract may result in sanctions and corrective actions.

As this new accreditation system is fully implemented, it may have an impact on the way that charter applications are negotiated between sponsoring districts and charter school applications. It will certainly have an impact on the type of data that charter schools are obliged to report to their sponsoring district for accountability purposes.

Analysis of CSAP Results

CSAP results are reported for sixteen of the charter schools in this study, listed in Table 16. **Ten of the charter schools in this study did not participate in the 1998 CSAP because they do not serve students in the 3rd or 4th grade**: Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley) Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11), P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools), EXCEL School (Durango 9-R), Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District), Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County), Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County), Connect Charter School (Pueblo District 70), Swallows Charter School (Pueblo 70) and Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)

Another eight charter schools in this evaluation study administered the CSAP but their results cannot be reported publicly. As a matter of policy, CDE does not report the results for schools where 16 or fewer students took the test out of concern that scores may be identifiable to individual students. The schools in this category include: GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11), Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District), Community Involved Charter

School (Jefferson County), Excel Academy (Jefferson County),[19] Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District), Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez), and Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District).[20]

4th grade reading scores for the 14 participating schools **ranged from a high of 93% proficient or above** (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) **to a low of 30%** (Roosevelt-Edison School District, Colorado Springs 11).

4th grade writing scores for the 14 participating schools **ranged from a high of 75% proficient or above** (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) **to a low of 19%** (Roosevelt-Edison School District, Colorado Springs 11).

3rd grade reading scores for the 16 participating schools **ranged from a high of 97% proficient or above** (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Start School District) **to a low of 45%** (Roosevelt-Edison Charter School, Colorado Springs 11)

As a group, the charter schools included in this evaluation study outperformed the statewide average on the CSAP.

- The average score for the charter schools on 4th grade reading was 70% proficient or above, compared to a state average of 57%.
- The average score for the charter schools on 4th grade writing was 53% proficient or above, compared to a state average of 36%.
- The average score for the charter schools on 3rd grade reading was 81% proficient or above, compared to a state average of 66%.

Over three-quarters of the charter schools in this study also outperformed the average scores of their sponsoring districts on the CSAP.

- In 4th grade reading, 11 of 14 schools (79%) exceeded their sponsoring districts' average scores.
- In 4th grade writing, 13 of 14 schools (93%) exceeded their sponsoring district' average scores.
- In 3rd grade reading, 14 of 16 schools (88%) exceeded their districts' average scores.

Finally, the charter schools in this study generally outperformed other public schools in their district who serve a comparable student population. The evaluation team matched each charter school that reported CSAP scores with one or two schools in its sponsoring district that serve a roughly comparable student population based on free-lunch eligibility, racial/ethnic composition and eligibility for special education services. The matches are certainly not exact, but they provide a generally fair basis for comparison. The fit between the charter schools and their comparison schools is not as close in smaller districts with a more limited pool of comparison schools from which to draw.

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[19] Excel Academy administered the CSAP test to both its third and fourth grade students. The results are reported only for the 3rd grade reading assessment, however, because fewer than 16 fourth-grade students took the reading and writing assessment.

[20] Aspen Community School administered the CSAP test to both its third and fourth grade students. The results are reported only for the 3rd grade reading assessment, however, because fewer than 16 fourth-grade students took the reading and writing assessment.

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Table 16 - Results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program - Percentage Of Students Who Scored At The Proficient Level Or Above

	4th Grade Reading (1997 / 1998)	4th Grade Writing (1997 / 1998)	3rd Grade Reading Comprehension (1998)
State of Colorado	**57% / 57%**	**20% / 36%**	**66%**
Adams 12 - Five Star	***49% / 51%***	***24% / 30%***	***58%***
Academy of Charter Schools	**48% / 62%**	**22% / 42%**	**70%**
Comparison Schools:			
Wyco Drive	*55% / 65%*	*29% / 35%*	*55%*
Malley Drive	*52% / 66%*	*14% / 29%*	*64%*
Stargate Charter	**100% / 93%**	**75% / 75%**	**97%**
Comparison Schools:			
Tarver Elementary	*60% / 65%*	*31% / 36%*	*73%*
Hunter's Glenn	*65% / 66%*	*35% / 37%*	*70%*
Canon City School District	***60% / 53%***	***27% / 28%***	***69%***
Mountain View Core Knowledge Charter	**60% / 72%**	**35% / 60%**	**92%**
Comparison School			
Harrison Elementary	*73% / 56%*	*38% / 25%*	*70%*
Cherry Creek School Dist.	***70% / 72%***	***45% / 53%***	***75%***
Cherry Creek Academy	**88% / 88%**	**48% / 81%**	**80%**
Comparison Schools:			
Cherry Hills Village	*84% / 85%*	*57% / 56%*	*88%*
Willow Creek	*94% / 91%*	*67% / 59%*	*79%*
Cheyenne Mountain School District	***86% / 77%***	***59% / 56%***	***88%***
Cheyenne Mountain Academy	**88% / 78%**	**88% / 64%**	**92%**
Comparison Schools:			
Skyway Park	*88% / 66%*	*61% / 32%*	*76%*
Gold Camp	*n/a / 69%*	*n/a / 56%*	*83%*

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Table 16 - Results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (Cont.) Percentage Of Students Who Scored At The Proficient Level Or Above

	4th Grade Reading (1997 / 1998)	**4th Grade Writing (1997 / 1998)**	**3rd Grade Reading Comprehension (1998)**
Colorado Springs 11	***58% / 59%***	***30% / 36%***	***45%***
Roosevelt-Edison Charter	**43% / 30%**	**19% / 19%**	**45%**
Comparison Schools:			
Rogers Elementary	*48% / 47%*	*16% / 16%*	*n/a*
Wilson Elementary	*52% / 40%*	*20% / 29%*	*59%*
Douglas County	***75% / 70%***	***46% / 47%***	***80%***
Academy Charter	**72% / 65%**	**28% / 49%**	**89%**
Comparison Schools:			
Castle Rock Elementary	*68% / 67%*	*40% / 39%*	*80%*
Larkspur Elementary	*69% / 86%*	*29% / 43%*	*89%*
Core Knowledge Charter	**90% / 78%**	**65% / 48%**	**87%**
Comparison Schools			
Pine Grove Elementary	*87% / 77%*	*50% / 65%*	*86%*
Summit View Elementary	*86% / 77%*	*59% / 44%*	*80%*
Renaissance Charter	**68% / 61%**	**45% / 48%**	**74%**
Comparison Schools:			
Cherokee Trail	*71% / 67%*	*45% / 44%*	*76%*
Acres Green Elementary	*65% / 67%*	*51% / 40%*	*70%*
Jefferson County	***62% / 64%***	***37% / 43%***	***71%***
Jefferson Academy	**70% / 74%**	**57% / 62%**	**94%**
Comparison Schools:			
Stoney Creek Elementary	*70% / 71%*	*51% / 53%*	*67%*
Shaffer Elementary	*67% / 84%*	*41% / 57%*	*83%*
Excel Academy	not reported - fewer than 16 students took the test	not reported - fewer than 16 students took the test	**81%**
Comparison Schools:			
Ute Elementary			*82%*
Shaffer Elementary			*83%*
Littleton School District	***72% / 72%***	***47% / 54%***	***75%***
Littleton Academy	**71% / 77%**	**54% / 60%**	**76%**
Comparison Schools:			
Sandberg Elementary	*74% / 81%*	*55% / 58%*	*76%*
Runyun Elementary	*76% / 82%*	*48% / 49%*	*80%*

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Table 16 - Results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (Cont.)
Percentage Of Students Who Scored At The Proficient Level Or Above

	4th Grade Reading (1997 / 1998)	4th Grade Writing (1997 / 1998)	3rd Grade Reading Comprehension (1998)
Lewis Palmer School Dist.	***78% / 78%***	***48% / 49%***	***85%***
Lewis Palmer Charter Academy	**79% / 80%**	**63% / 70%**	**88%**
Comparison Schools			
Lewis Palmer Elementary	*75% / 79%*	*49% / 44%*	*84%*
Palmer Lake Elementary	*71% / 84%*	*44% / 56%*	*76%*
Park School District	***46% / 61%***	***23% / 27%***	***65%***
Lake George - Guffey	**47% / 61%**	**35% / 33%**	**71%**
Comparison School:			
Edith Teter Elementary	*45% / 61%*	*17% / 27%*	*57%*
Pueblo School District 60	***44% / 53%***	***19% / 30%***	***67%***
Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences	**26% / 66%**	**3% / 37%**	**80%**
Comparison Schools			
Heritage Elementary	*68% / 62%*	*28% / 45%*	*77%*
Belmont Elementary	*61% / 63%*	*30% / 28%*	*75%*
Roaring Fork School Dist.			**74%**
Aspen Community School	not reported - fewer than 16 students took the test	not reported - fewer than 16 students took the test	**82%**
Comparison School:			
Basalt Elementary			*74%*

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education

Charter School Participation in Schools of Excellence/Challenger Schools Program

The 32 charter schools in this study represent 2% of the total number of public schools in the state of Colorado. Yet, they represent 20% of the Colorado Schools of Excellence and 19% of the Commissioner's Challenger Schools.

In order to be considered for this recognition, public schools must take the initiative to apply. Every school is eligible to apply. These designations represent the only statutory, statewide recognition program of Colorado schools by the Colorado Department of Education.

In March 1998, the State Board of Education selected five **John Irwin Colorado Schools of Excellence.** These schools were selected from the1998 Commissioner's Challenger Schools based on two-year records of outstanding accomplishment, supported by multiple assessments of student performance, community satisfaction and demonstration of effective school practices. Recognition is granted annually by the State Board of Education. Recommendations for recognition are received from the State School Performance Awards Panel. Among these five schools is one charter school included in this study:

- Jefferson Academy Elementary Charter School (Jefferson County School District).

The State Board of Education designated 47 schools as **Commissioner's Challenger Schools** during 1997-98. These schools have contracted to show two-year records of outstanding student performance related to the State Board goals, assessed through a combination of performance-based, criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments. In addition, school contracts target community satisfaction and effective school practices. Nine charter schools in this study are Challenger Schools:

- Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy (Cheyenne Mountain 12)
- Academy Charter School (Douglas County)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County)
- Eagle County Charter Academy (Eagle County)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Jefferson Academy Elementary Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60)
- The Connect School (Pueblo District 70).

Market-Based Indicators

As schools of choice, charter school performance also can be measured by market-based indicators, such as the demand for the school (waiting lists), parent involvement and satisfaction, and re-enrollment rates.

- None of the schools in this study experienced enrollment levels under planned capacity. The great majority of schools had waiting lists, in some cases, very extensive ones.

- Parent satisfaction and teacher satisfaction was reported at high levels, as discussed in detail at pages 38-42 and 49-50 of this report, respectively.

- While a few schools struggled to maintain stable enrollment, the majority of schools met or exceeded their goals for re-enrollment.

Data related to these indicators are reported as part of the individual school profiles.

Charter Renewals

Of the 32 schools in this evaluation study, 17 schools have undergone the process of renewing their charter. All of these schools have successfully completed the renewal process. These schools are:

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
Mountain View Core Knowledge Charter School (Canon City School District)
Cheyenne Mountain Charter School (Cheyenne Mountain School District)
Academy of Charter Schools (Douglas County School District)
Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
Renaissance School (Douglas County School District)
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County School District)
Jefferson Academy Elementary School (Jefferson County School District)
Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)l
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez School District)
Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park School District)
Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60)
The Connect School (Pueblo District 70)
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)

In all but one instance, the term of the charter renewal was equal to or greater than the original term of the charter. The exception, Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District), was originally awarded a three year charter. Its charter subsequently was renewed for one year. Upon further review by the sponsoring district, the school's charter was renewed for a five year term, with an audit in Year 3.

The process used by sponsoring districts to consider the renewal of a charter varies on a district-by-district basis. The range of renewal activities completed by schools in this study included:

- Completion of a renewal application with a question and response format requiring extensive attachments.
- Negotiations with district officials.
- Public hearings.
- An outside educational audit.
- A site review by district review team.
- Completion of a renewal criteria checklist addressed to five major areas: Academics, Goals and Objectives, Financial, Administration and Governance and Accountability.

Nine charter schools in the study found the renewal process well-defined. In contrast, another seven schools responded that their district's process was vaguely defined. Several schools expressed frustration about the time-consuming nature of the process.

Five schools said their districts had well-defined, written criteria for renewal. Another eleven schools stated that the criteria for renewal were not well-defined in their districts.

Representatives from schools that have successfully completed the process had these recommendations:

- Maintain excellent communications with the sponsoring district on an ongoing basis.
- Make an external site visit part of the renewal process. An outside audience can raise good questions as a critical friend that can help the school progress and better serve its "R & D" function.
- Collect good data from day one.
- Identify multiple ways to measure your achievements.
- Be willing to be accountable for every nuance of your charter.
- Begin planning for renewal immediately after the original charter is approved.

In 1998, the Colorado League of Charter Schools received a grant from the Charter Friends National Network to develop an Accountability and Evaluation Proposal. Elements of that proposal are being studied and piloted in some school districts and in over a dozen charter schools during the 1998-99 school year. At least one district (Jefferson County School District) is implementing components of this accountability proposal in its charter renewal process.

School Profiles

This section of the evaluation study looks at the performance of each charter school against its own goals for student achievement and school performance. The following pages contain a detailed two-page profile for each of the 32 schools in this study. The first page of the profile summarizes key demographic data about the school and lists the school's mission, educational approach, governance structure and performance goals. The second page summarizes the student assessment data and other performance indicators collected by the school.

These questions provide a useful context for considering the data in the school profiles:

- *Did the school set high goals for student achievement?* Unless the goals themselves are worthy, their accomplishment does not necessarily translate into improved learning results for students.

- *Are the school's goals consistent with its mission and distinctive educational approach?* The best performance goals are those that measure what matters most to the school community.

- *Are the school's goals measurable? And is the school using assessment tools that are capable of measuring the goals?* In this regard, recognize that it is much easier for a Core Knowledge school to identify assessments that can measure its curriculum, than a school that is pursuing a less structured program. For example, most Core Knowledge schools would consider the results of norm-referenced tests to be a fair indicator of their progress. Alternative schools would not. Several schools in this administer the ITBS only at the request of their sponsoring districts. These schools do not accept the results as valid in light of the non-alignment between this assessment and the schools' educational program.

- *Who does the school serve?* Schools that serve many students who are at risk of under-achievement, because of economic disadvantage, race/ethnicity or special needs, face a very different set of challenges than those schools who do not.

- *Does the assessment data reflect progress over time?* Consider the assessment data in terms of growth, and not just at a particular point in time. The same score can indicate marked improvement in one school and static performance in another, simply because the schools may start from dramatically different baselines.

- *Does the assessment data reflect progress of the same cohort of students?* Most schools report assessment data by grade levels. This method tracks the performance of a first grade class one year against the performance of a different first grade class the second year. It does not track the same cohort of students over time to measure the growth of their achievement.

- *How many students took the assessment?* In small schools where only a few students take a particular assessment, the results are much less reliable than with a larger sample. In cases where the sample (number of students taking the test) is small, the performance of a single student can have a dramatic impact on the results for a grade level or for an entire school. For the same reason, it is very difficult to track student achievement over time when only a handful of students take the tests each year.

ACADEMY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Sponsoring District: Adams 12 Five Star School District

Location: Lakewood (Suburban)
Enrollment: 763
Grade Levels: Pre- K-12
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 300+

Student/Teacher Ratio: 18.8
Percent Minority: 26.6%
Percent Free Lunch: 18.2%%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 24.5%
Percent Special Education: 3.9%

MISSION: Our mission is to offer students, kindergarten through 12th grade, having a variety of learning and communication styles, the opportunity, within a safe and structured environment, to excel at a challenging course of study through testing, placement and quality instruction that develops his or her talents in areas such as phonics, literature, penmanship, writing, speech, language, logic, civics, history, geography, research and computer skills, math, scientific methods, arts, music and physical education. We recognize self-esteem comes with accomplishment and achievement; therefore, we will provide opportunity for personal growth through academic achievement. We view parental satisfaction with our program and accomplishments as a gauge of our success; therefore, we require active parent involvement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Academy of Charter Schools operates as a back to basics school emphasizing academics in a safe environment. The Academy uses the Core Knowledge Curriculum by E. D. Hirsch, which offers a planned progression of specific knowledge in history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts and fine arts. It represents a first and ongoing attempt to state specifically a core of shared knowledge that children should learn in American schools. The Core Knowledge Sequence is not a list of facts to be memorized. Rather, it is a guide to coherent content from grade to grade, designed to encourage steady academic progress as children build their knowledge and skills from one year to the next. The Core Knowledge Sequence is distinguished by its specificity. Moreover, because the Sequence offers a coherent plan that builds year by year, it helps prevent repetitions and gaps in instruction that result from vague curricular guidelines.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of ten parents, makes policy decisions for the school. The Executive Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students who have attended Academy for three years or more will score in the 65-75 percentile on nationally-normed tests.
- Average test scores for students will increase by at least five percentile points.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95% for elementary and 92% for secondary grade levels.
- Parents and community members will contribute over 5,000 hours of volunteer time annually.
- 90% of parents, staff, community, students will be satisfied with the school.
- Every graduating student will be prepared for college (college remediation courses will not be necessary).
- 80% or more of students who have attended Academy more than two years will graduate.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) National percentile rank for both fall/spring of designated school year 50% is the national average	***Reading Language*** K-6 46/59 46/59 7-8 60/64 51/59 9-11 50/52 44/53 Sch 50/59 38/51 (all students) ***Math Soc. Studies*** K-6 41/58 44/50 7-8 51/59 55/59 9-11 45/55 50/61 School 44/59 48/54 ***Science Composite*** K-6 50/57 43/55 7-8 58/59 55/61 9-11 55/57 47/54 School 53/57 46/56	***Reading Language*** K-6 46/53 43/50 7-8 53/56 47/51 9-11 50/52 na School 49/54 44/50 (all students) ***Math Soc. Studies*** K-6 44/55 39/46 7-8 49/57 48/52 9-11 49/54 52/53 School 46/55 44/49 ***Science Composite*** K-6 45/54 44/51 7-8 48/51 48/52 9-11 53/55 50/53 School 48/53 47/52	***Reading Language*** K-6 43/51 42/52 7-8 51/55 5647 9-12 48/55 na School 47/53 44/50 (all students) ***Math Soc. Studies*** K-6 45/54 39/46 7-8 49/54 48/50 9-12 46/56 50/57 School 46/54 44/50 ***Science Composite*** K-6 46/51 43/49 7-8 49/54 47/50 9-12 51/59 47/56 School 48/54 45/51
ITBS Longitudinal Data Data shown are Pretest/Post-test scores for students who attended Academy of Charter Schools for more than 3 years as of Spring 1998. (Pretest represents the entering test scores of students. Post-test represents Spring 1998 scores.)			***Reading Language*** K-6 34/63 42/64 7-8 46/61 33/58 9-12 53/57 na School 45/61 40/61 ***Math Soc. Studies*** K-6 36/66 32/53 7-8 39/61 46/56 9-12 38/64 49/64 School 37/64 42/57 ***Science Composite*** K-6 46/60 41/61 7-8 47/57 41/57 9-12 57/63 57/63 School 50/60 43/60
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 48% proficient or above (49% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 22% proficient or above (24% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 61.9% proficient or above (51% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 42.9% proficient or above (30% district average) **Third grade reading:** 70.3% proficient or above (58% district average)
Parent Survey on Teacher Performance On 5 point scale, 5 being the highest	Overall Score - 4.35 (56% of parents responded to the survey)	Overall Score - 4.34 (68% of parents responded to the survey)	Overall Score - 3.54 (24% of parents responded to the survey)
Parent Involvement	Over 10,000 hours 99% of parents volunteer	Over 19,900 hours 99% of parents volunteer	Over 20,995 hours 67% of parents volunteer
Attendance Rate	91.7%	92.8%	94.2%
Graduation Rate		100%	78.6% (Rate is 91.7% for students who attended Academy for more than one year)

STARGATE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Adams 12 Five Star School District

Location: Northglenn (Suburban)
Enrollment: 226
Grade Levels: 1-8**
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 50

Student/Teacher Ratio: 21.1
Percent Minority: 14.6%
Percent Free Lunch: .9%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 1.3%
Percent Special Education: 1.8%

** Stargate serves middle school students with a "School-within-a-School" program located at Thornton Middle School.

MISSION: We believe each child is entitled to an education commensurate with his/her ability to learn. Our purpose is to create a charter school with multi-district enrollment to serve those children whose academic and/or intellectual abilities require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. This differentiated educational program will be made regardless of disability, race, creed, color or gender, national origin, religion or ancestry so that these children can realize their contribution to self and society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Stargate uses District 12 curriculum, but teachers use different and innovative instructional strategies for gifted students. The school features foreign language at all levels, personal learning plans, multi-aged classrooms and direct parent involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Council (comprised of four parents and three staff members) makes policy for the school. The school's lead teacher and business manager are responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Assure that every student is working at his or her ability level in reading and math based on individual CAT-V and performance level assessments.
- Meet or exceed state model content standards.
- Maintain CAT-V scores at 90% or above.
- Maintain or exceed an attendance rate of 95%.
- Achieve a 95% retention rate.
- 80% of third and fourth graders will score at the proficient level or above on the CSAP
- Maintain a high level of parent satisfaction.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
California Achievement Test (CAT-V) National percentile rank	**3rd grade** Math: 93 Reading: 91 Sciences: 91 Soc. Sci.: 84 Language: 90 Overall: 94	**3rd grade 7th grade** Math: 92/62 92/55 Reading: 86/59 92/53 Sciences: 93/60 95/61 Soc. Sci.: 83/61 89/54 Language: 88/60 91/52 Overall: 90/61 93/53 Scores are shown for Stargate/District 12	**3rd grade 7th grade** Math: 94/70 91/66 Reading: 93/63 95/59 Sciences: 96/65 96/64 Soc. Sci.: 86/64 94/60 Language: 85/59 95/55 Overall: 94/65 97/61 Scores are shown for Stargate/District 12
District Performance Assessment Scores shown are for Stargate students/district average	**3rd 4th 5th** **Math** Communication 3.0/2.3 -3.3/2.7 -2.8/2.4 Problem Solving 3.1/2.5 -3.4/2.8 -3.1/2.4 **Writing** Content 3.6/2.6 -3.4/2.4 -3.2/2.5 Originality 3.6/2.5 -3.4/2.5 -2.9/2.4 Style 3.6/2.4 -2.8/2.4 -3.0/2.2 Editing 3.3/2.4 -3.0/2.4- 3.0/2.4	**3rd 4th 5th** **Math** Communication 85/47 78/61 76/51 Problem Solving 88/66 96/63 76/45 **Science** Communication 72/53 58/39 76/45 Problem Solving 92/72 92/74 88/68 **Writing** Content 63/63 85/60 76/61 Originality 63/60 85/58 88/56 Style 63/52 85/48 84/47 Editing 48/50 78/61 80/54	**3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th** **Math** Communication na 85/63 na 77/63 92/55 Problem Solving na 85/70 na 92/69 92/50 **Science** Communication 83/55 na na 54/51 85/57 Problem Solving 97/74 na na 82/55 85/55 **Writing** Content na na 54/55 68/49 92/64 Originality na na 61/41 54/44 46/54 Style na na 61/41 54/44 46/54 Editing na na 82/47 87/50 100/50
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 100% proficient or above (49% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 73% proficient or above (24% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 93% proficient or above (51% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 75% proficient or above (36% district average) **Third grade reading** 97% proficient or above (66% district average)
Achievement Level Test Results (On a 250 scale) Level tests are based on the District 12 curriculum framework but the questions are standardized on a small national sample Results are shown for Stargate/District 12		**Science Reading Math** 3rd 210/195 213/195 217/196 4th 211/201 218/203 221/205 5th 204/217 230/210 230/212 6th 221/206 231/214 243/218 7th 222/209 236/218 249/222	**Science Reading Math** 3rd 207/187 208/188 na 4th 218/199 216/198 211/196 5th 223/206 222/206 215/202 6th 235/212 229/212 218/206 7th 244/218 234/216 222/209 8th 251/244 232/219 225/211
Parent Involvement	9,000 hours	4,000+ hours	3,200+ hours
Parent Satisfaction % expressing satisfaction with school/children's progress	80-90%	92%	89%
Attendance Rate	95.7%	97%	96.6%

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SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Boulder Valley School District

Location: Boulder (Suburban)
Enrollment: 270
Grade Levels: 6-8
Opening Date: Fall 1996
Waiting List: 50

Student/Teacher Ratio: 15.91
Percent Minority: 11.1%
Percent Free Lunch: 2.6%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 4.1%
Percent Special Education: 4.4%

MISSION:

- To provide a rigorous, academic curriculum that promotes high levels of student effort and academic achievement.
- To foster high self-esteem through stimulating intellectual challenge and meaningful academic accomplishment.
- To inspire in students a lifelong love of learning and a desire for self-development.
- To create a community of peers who value scholarship, academic achievement and creativity.
- To serve as an excellent preparation for students intending to study in the International Baccalaureate program and other college-preparatory high school program.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Summit offers challenging, ability-grouped middle school courses in which students are placed through an assessment of mastery of each subject area and ability, rather than on the basis of age or grade level. Five required core courses include English, science, math, social studies and foreign language.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors is composed of seven voting members, elected by the parents of the entire student body as well as staff. The Principal and the Business Manager serve in a non-voting capacity. The Board sets policy for the school and the Principal is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From charter application and annual school improvement plans)

- To expand educational choices within Boulder Valley School District.
- To provide the option of advanced classes for any student on a self-selecting basis.
- To group students according to subject mastery rather than grade classification or age.
- To challenge every student in every course.
- To elicit academic achievement commensurate with each student's ability.
- To maintain an unwavering commitment to the mastery of educational fundamentals (content) and the development of critical thinking skills (process).
- To enhance each student's social and emotional development and to foster positive relationships among peers.
- To recognize that its customers are students, parents, and the community, and to be responsive and accountable to their concerns.
- To strive to reflect the diverse population of the Boulder Valley School District.
- To meet or exceed District and State curriculum, content and performance standards.
- To monitor the program and evaluate it regularly.
- To ensure safety, civility and an optimum leaning environment.

The school will use the CTBS (Terra Nova) assessment to check for:

- More than one year of growth in academic achievement for all students in every school year in the core areas.
- Address weaknesses noted in the previous year's test results.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) National percentile rank		**Reading Lang. Math** 6th 92.0 88.5 86.6 7th 92.8 87.2 85.0 8th 94.0 90.8 90.6 **Scien. Soc.Studies Spell.** 6th 88.7 87.0 80.2 7th 88.4 90.5 73.3 8th 92.6 89.0 72.8
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS - Terra Nova) National percentile rank Longitudinal comparison of students as they advance from one grade level to the next		**6th / 7th** **7th / 8th** 1997 / 1998 1997 / 1998 Reading: 90.8 / 92.8 94.0 / 94.0 Language: 87.3 / 87.2 86.6 /90.8 Math: 80.5 / 85.0 88.2 / 90.6 Science: 91.1 / 88.4 88.3 / 92.6 Social Studies: 86.6 / 90.5 92.4 / 89.0 Spelling: 83.3 / 73.3 78.8 / 72.8
Attendance Rate	94.6%	95.7%
Parent Involvement	18,000+ hours volunteered by parents/families	15,000+ hours volunteered by parents/families
Retention Rate Percentage of students who re-enroll for the following school year	97%	98%

Note: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd and 4th grade program

MOUNTAIN VIEW CORE KNOWLEGE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Canon City County School District Re-1

Location:	Canon City (Suburban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	20.8
Enrollment:	149	**Percent Minority:**	6.0%
Grade Levels:	K-4	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	375	**Percent Special Education:**	0%

MISSION: The mission of Mountain View Core Knowledge Charter School is to stimulate wonder and curiosity, engage the mind, and promote vision and understanding of the world to all students. Goals include giving students the opportunity to maximize potential by exposure to a common foundation of an organized body of knowledge sequentially presented by grade level. Character values including integrity, respect, responsibility and compassion will be strongly encouraged. The school achieves these goals through emphasis on a structured educational philosophy, strong encouragement of parental involvement, and commitment to treating each child as a unique individual.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The academic program is driven by the *Core Knowledge Sequence* curriculum, edited by Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., which comprises at least 50% of the instructional time. The Core Knowledge curriculum is supplemented for all grade levels with the *Modern Curriculum Press* phonics and spelling program, the *Open Court* Reading program, the *Saxon Mathematics* program, Spanish, music, art, physical education and library. The kindergarten program is full-day.

GOVERNANCE: The school's governing board is comprised of five parents. The school administrator serves as a non-voting member of the board. The board sets policy for the school. The principal makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter Application and School Improvement Plans)

- The school will implement the Core Knowledge Sequence curriculum.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of 96% or greater, to meet or exceed the average for public schools in the district.
- Volunteer involvement in the school will equal at least 100% of full-time staffing hours.
- Student performance will meet or exceed Colorado state performance standards in all subjects, for all grade levels.
- The school will address the educational needs of each student to promote individual progress and academic success.
- The school will maintain a stable enrollment.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - National percentile rank 50% is the national average Tests were administered in the spring of the academic year.	**Core score:** K 87 1st 77 2nd 67 3rd 73 4th 61	**Core score:** K 92 1st 88 2nd 74 3rd 64 4th 66 5th 52
Colorado Student Achievement Test	**Fourth grade reading:** 60% proficient or above (60% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 35% proficient or above (27% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 72% proficient or above (53% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 60% proficient or above (28% district average) **Third grade reading:** 92% proficient or above (69% district average)
Achievement Level Test for Canon City School District Scores show Mountain View performance and (district performance).	**3rd 4th** Language 205 (197) 211(208) Math 203(196) 209(206) Reading 204(194) 214(205) Median percentile rank: Language: 77 66 Math 77 55 Reading 63 85	**3rd 4th 5th** Language 208 (198) 214(206) 203(197) Math 202(195) 212(204) 214(211) Reading 203(197) 212(202) 216(210) Median percentile rank: Language: 79 (55) 72 (44) 61 (51) Math 62 (50) 68 (43) 55 (47) Reading 63(44) 67 (41) 64 (44)
Attendance Rate	95.8%	96%
Retention Rate	89%	95%
Parent Satisfaction Percentage of parents who are satisfied or very satisfied with the school		100%

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CHERRY CREEK ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Cherry Creek School District

Location: Englewood (Suburban)
Enrollment: 440
Grade Levels: K-8
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 1,100 (500 school age)

Student/Teacher Ratio: 17.4
Percent Minority: 5.5%
Percent Free Lunch: 0%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 0%
Percent Special Education: 7.5%

MISSION: Motivated children and responsible parents working together with dedicated teachers for excellent education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: This school employs a Core Knowledge curriculum to focus on solid, fundamental mastery of the basics. The program also emphasizes student character, community involvement and parent responsibility.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board (comprised of nine parents) makes policy for the school. The director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- The improvement goal for all students is 10% per year for each of the first three years of the charter. The ultimate goal is an attainment level of 85% for 85% of students, averaged over all subject areas.
- Student reading, math and science scores will increase by at least 5% per year from established baseline scores.
- Perfect attendance is the goal for every student.
- The school will not be satisfied with less than 100% retention of those students whose parents are dedicated to a serious education of their children.

97

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills National percentile rank 50% is the national average	**Reading Lang. Math** **1st** 61/73 68/73 68/75 **2nd** 59/75 50/79 52/80 **3rd** 58/69 39/65 48/63 **4th** 53/60 42/64 51/63 **5th** 62/72 56/64 61/68 **6th** 56/59 53/63 53/66 Scores are shown for Fall 1995/Spring 1996 Average Improvement : Reading - 22% Language Arts - 30% Mathematics - 25%	**Reading Lang. Math** **1st** 87 91 97 **2nd** 72 79 81 **3rd** 68 81 74 **4th** 73 73 69 **5th** 64 63 63 **6th** 76 72 72 **7th** 70 62 66 Scores are for Spring 1997 Average Improvement: Reading - 4.77% Language - 12.67% Math - 10.09% Grades K-2 scored in top 10% of district in language and math Grades 3-4 scores in top 25% of district in language and math.	**Reading Lang. Math** **K** 94 95 98 **1st** 87 88 89 **2nd** 88 90 91 **3rd** 67 69 69 **4th** 78 79 79 **5th** 71 66 66 **6th** 78 71 64 **7th** 70 62 78 **8th** 79 80 77 Scores are for Spring 1998
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 88% proficient or above (70% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 48% proficient or above (45% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 89% proficient or above (72% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 81% proficient or above (53% district average) **Third grade reading:** 80% proficient or above (75% district average)
Parent Satisfaction		98% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the school	92% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the school
Parent Involvement	98% of parents volunteer	12,000 + hours volunteered 95% of parents volunteer	12,000+ hours
Attendance Rate	95.2%	95.7%	98%

CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN CHARTER ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Cheyenne Mountain District 12

Location:	Colorado Springs (Suburban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	20.9
Enrollment:	291	**Percent Minority:**	10.7%
Grade Levels:	K-8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	7.6%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	14.1%
Waiting List:	140	**Percent Special Education:**	2.7%

MISSION: The mission of Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy is to help guide students in development of their character and academic potential through academically rigorous, content-rich educational programs.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Academy's educational program and approach to curriculum emphasizes the "Core Knowledge Sequence" supplemented with "Direct Instruction" -- carefully crafted research-based curriculum materials that teach concepts incrementally and sequentially. The school believes that education cannot be taught in a moral vacuum; education reform depends on putting character first.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors, comprised of four parents and one community member, sets policy for the school. The Administrator makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Achieve an attendance rate of 95%.
- Achieve an average median attainment of 80% (as measured by standardized tests) in all subjects for all grade levels.
- 90% of students will have the skills/competencies to advance to the next grade (for 1996-97 school year). The goal for the 1997-98 school year is 95%.
- 100% of all classes will perform at or above grade level.
- 80% of at-risk students will narrow the gap between their current grade level and performance level.
- 60% of students performing above grade level will increase the gap between current grade level and their performance level.
- Stakeholders will volunteer 4,000 hours per year.
- 90% of parents will be satisfied with the school's total educational program.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Stanford Achievement Test Grade level equivalent/ National percentile rank Battery Totals	**Baseline Spring 1996** K K 1 / 51 2.0 / 96 1st 1.1/ 53 2.6 / 81 2nd 2.1 / 53 3.3 / 68 3rd 3.5 / 64 5.7 / 83 4th 4.6 / 63 5.6 / 72 5th 5.7 / 67 9.4 / 82 6th 7.3 / 69 8.4 / 82 7th 8.7 / 72 12+ / 82 8th 7.8 / 52 9.0 / 63 Average percentile ranking of all students 81	**Spring 1997** K 1.6 / 92 1st 2.5 / 78 2nd 4.3 / 86 3rd 4.5 / 65 4th 7.5 / 85 5th 7.4 / 69 6th 9.4 / 85 7th 11.0 / 85 8th 12+ / 82 Average percentile ranking of all students 81	**Spring 1998** K 1.5 / 87 1st 2.7 / 89 2nd 4.4 / 81 3rd 5.5 / 74 4th 6.7 / 77 5th 8.8 / 83 6th 9.9 / 80 7th 12+ / 90 8th 12+ / 87 Average percentile ranking of all students 81
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 88% proficient or above (86% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 54% proficient or above (59% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 79% proficient or above (77% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 64% proficient or above (56% district average) **Third grade reading:** 92% proficient or above (88% district average)
Percentage of Students with skills/competencies to advance to the next grade level (Measured by teacher observation, classroom evaluations, and Stanford achievement tests)	99%	96%	96%
Re-enrollment Rate		97%	89%
Parent Involvement Number of volunteer hours	8,000	5,000	4,000+
Parent Satisfaction % of parents satisfied with educational program	90%	98.4%	98%
Attendance Rate	93%	94%	94.5

COMMUNITY PREP CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 11

Location:	Colorado Springs (urban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	38.1
Enrollment:	122	**Percent Minority:**	40.2%
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Percent Free Lunch:**	32.8%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	35.2%
Waiting List:	42	**Percent Special Education:**	13.1%

MISSION: To provide a quality education in an environment that encourages innovative modes of teaching and learning in order to empower each individual student to develop academically, socially, physically as a global citizen of the 21st century.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: This school serves high-risk potential drop-outs and dropouts through a program jointly operated by District 11 and the City of Colorado Springs. CPS uses a modified Paideia instructional approach, based on student-centered learning. The program teaches life-long learning skills, successful employment and responsible citizenship. Didactic instruction is combined with coaching sessions and Socratic seminars. The school uses community-based education providers and the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) – an individualized, self-paced, competency based, open-entry/exit learning approach that integrates varied instructional materials and technologies. Students do not progress to a higher level of CCP until they demonstrate 80% mastery of their current level. Each student has an Individual Service Strategy that addresses social and educational goals. Support services and case management are provided by Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds to overcome barriers to learning.

GOVERNANCE: The school is managed by the Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs. An advisory school-based accountability committees develops the annual school improvement plan. The principal makes day to day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):
- Each student will earn an average of 7 credits.
- The school's attendance rate will increase by 10% (for 1997-98).
- The school will meet all exit outcome standards of District 11 and the State of Colorado.
- The school will reduce the 1995-96 actual dropout rate of 3.3%.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Credits Granted to Students Enrolled Note All credits require 80% mastery of material	523 credits granted (NOTE Incoming transcripts of students from the schools they transferred from showed that only 12% of grades earned were at 80% level or above)	887 credits granted	1,010 credit granted
Attendance	78 1%	77 5%	87%
Retention Rate			81% - 18 students graduated and 80 students returned out of 122 total
Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) 10th grade National Percentile Rank		**Scores shown are for Fall 1996/Spring 1997** Reading 43/32 *District 11 Averages 55/59* Writing 36/34 *District 11 Averages 51/57* Math 31/35 *District 11 Averages 56/52*	**Scores shown are for Fall 1997 Community Prep/District 11** Reading 32 / 59 Language 34 / 57 Math 35 / 52

Note: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

GLOBE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 11

Location:	Colorado Springs (Urban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	12.1
Enrollment:	136	**Percent Minority:**	23.5%
Grade Levels:	K-12	**Percent Free Lunch:**	9.6%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	9.6%
Waiting List:	155	**Percent Special Education:**	11.0%

MISSION: The GLOBE Charter School of Colorado Springs will provide educational environments, academic curricula, teaching methods, and individualized programs, goals and assessments for all its students, whose general aims will be to rejuvenate the educational process for all participants, reconnect it in a meaningful and dynamic way with the individual, the community, and the world it is meant to serve, and make a positive contribution to the local, the national and the global educational debate, by:

1. **Establishing a creative partnership** of parents, educators, students, community members, academics, and professionals to revitalize the educational process.
2. **Addressing the needs of special student populations** ... through highly individualized, innovative, integrated and consistent programs.
3. **Piloting a core curriculum that is coherent, continuous and relevant**, providing all students a sense of connectedness with, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in, the learning process and the life of their school, their community, and the world in which they live.
4. **Restoring choice and responsibility** to parents, teachers, and students, with regard to the schooling and education process as a whole – its contents, aims, procedures, structure, environment, organization, ideas, vision, purpose.
5. **Providing an innovative experimental model** through curriculum materials and projects, educational environments and programs, classroom presentations, and teacher training workshops, as a contribution to the general project of education reform in Colorado.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school uses a global, issues-oriented curriculum, featuring interdisciplinary thematic units, community service projects, portfolio assessment, and dynamic partnerships between students, faculty, and scholars/professionals in various disciplines.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors (comprised of five parents, one staff member, one accountability committee member and two community representatives) makes policy decisions for the school. The CEO and faculty make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- GLOBE students will perform at or near district and national averages in all basic academic skills areas as measured by standardized tests.
- Improve math achievement, as measured by standardized tests, for all grades.
- Systematically link the curriculum, daily and weekly lesson plans, performance assessments, portfolio assessments and individualized student goals.
- Increase individualization of curriculum and experiential learning opportunities.
- Cultivate parent volunteer participation.
- Develop, test and implement assessments, including portfolios, that more directly influence the teaching and learning process.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
District Achievement Levels Test (DALT)	Read. Math Lang. 3rd 203 180 198 4th 208 198 220 5th 200 195 198 6th 227 225 225 7th 227 220 225 8th 225 218 225	Reading Math Language 3rd 195/192 180/200 188/208 4th 194/209 184/197 198/204 5th 209/201 204/200 208/197 6th 209/209 202/206 211/208 7th 210/223 209/221 203/214 8th 207/233 214/235 209/216 Scores shown are for **GLOBE STUDENTS** **Fall 1996/Spring 1997**	Reading Math Lang. 3rd 205 197 202 (191) (196) (199) 4th 203 210 210 (205) (207) (208) 5th 204 204 204 (211) (216) (213) 6th 208 206 205 (215) (220) (217) 7th 206 207 203 (218) (226) (219) 8th 222 222 219 (223) (232) (224) Scores shown are for Spring 1998. District averages are shown in parentheses ( )
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) National percentile rank 50% is national average		8th 10th **Reading** 54.2/54 67.3/63 **Lang.** 43.9/44 55.8/57 **Math** 46.3/47 49.5/57 **Core** 46.6/47 55.8/57 Scores shown are Average score of GLOBE students/district average	5th 7th **Reading** 46 29 **Lang.** 20 24 **Math** 12 24 **Core** 23 30 The test was administered 2/98.
Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) Grade 10 National percentile rank			**Males Females** **Reading** 62 (57) 47(62) **Writing** 31 (49) 51(64) **Math** 45 (58) 49 (57) **Core** 43 45 District 11 scores are shown in parentheses ( )
Attendance Rate	94.4%	95.5%	93%
Parent Involvement	3,000 hours volunteered	1,600 hours volunteered	2,000 hours volunteered
Portfolios	By year end, all students had portfolios that included evaluation rubrics for each subject, student work from throughout the year, standardized test scores and teacher evaluations.	By year end, all students had portfolios that included evaluation rubrics for each subject, student work from throughout the year, standardized test scores and teacher evaluations.	By year end, all students had portfolios that included evaluation rubrics for each subject, student work from throughout the year, standardized test scores and teacher evaluations.

Note: Results of the CSAP cannot be reported for this school because 16 or fewer students took the test in each year.

ROOSEVELT-EDISON CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 11

Location:	Colorado Springs (Urban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	13.7
Enrollment:	684	**Percent Minority:**	50.0%
Grade Levels:	K-5	**Percent Free Lunch:**	44.7%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	60.0%
Waiting List:	375	**Percent Special Education:**	2.3%

MISSION: The mission of the Colorado Springs-Edison Charter School is to prepare a diverse cross section of Colorado Springs children for success as students, workers and citizens by providing them with a world class education at prevailing school costs.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Roosevelt-Edison Charter School is a partnership between the Edison Project and Colorado Springs District 11. Partnership schools are required to blend the research-proven elements of Edison's school design with the vision, creativity and energy of education professionals in local communities. The school design includes the organization of students into multi-age "houses", an innovative schedule, team teaching, an extended school day and year, a rich and challenging curriculum (*Success for All* in Reading, *Everyday Math, Science Place, Heartwood: An Ethics Curriculum for Children*), an extensive technology program and partnerships with parents and community. Instructional strategies include cooperative learning, projects and direct instruction. The Edison Project has developed its own assessment system to support its program.

GOVERNANCE: The national Edison Project sets policy related to school design and major program parameters for Roosevelt Edison. A school-based advisory group, comprised of parents and representatives from the community, helps set budget priorities and implement local programs related to public relations, student achievement, fund raising and school events.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter Application and School Improvement Plans)

- Increase reading test scores by 5% from pre-test to post-test on an annual basis, as measured by Gates McGinty in grades 3-5 and Success for All in grades K-2.
- Increase math test scores by 5% from pre-test to post-test on an annual basis, as measured by DALT in grades 3-5 and teacher assessments in grades K-2.
- Increase the percentage of students reading at the proficient level by 4% per year.

MEASURE	**1996-97**	**1997-98**
District Achievement Level Tests (DALT) Data is reported in RIT scores comparing growth from fall to spring. District results are shown in parentheses ( ).	**Reading Math Language** 3rd 184/189 178/181 184/190 (191/199) (186/197) (191/201) 4th 195/198 192/197 194/201 (199/205) (198/208) (201/208) 5th 201/205 200/204 202/207 (207/211) (207/217) (209/214)	**Reading Math Language** 3rd 179/190 176/186 179/190 (186/199) (184/201) (189/201) 4th 191/199 188/195 192/199 (199/206) (198/207) (201/208) 5th 202/208 202/207 205/210 (206/211) (207/216) (209/214)
Colorado Student Achievement Test	**Fourth grade reading:** 43% proficient or above (58% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 19% proficient or above (30% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 30% proficient or above (59% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 19% proficient or above (36% district average) **Third grade reading:** 45% proficient or above (64% district average)
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - National percentile rank. National average is 50% Fifth grade scores are shown both for Roosevelt-Edison/District 11.	3rd 4th 5th Reading 27 41 43/56 Lang. 22 29 30/49 Math. 20 23 21/49 Core 22 31 29/51	3rd 4th 5th Reading 28 43 44/56 Lang. 25 36 36/51 Math. 27 23 29/51 Core 24 34 35/52
Attendance Rate		94.9%
Parent Involvement	4,700+ hours volunteered by parents/families	6,000+ hours volunteered by parents/families
Parent Satisfaction (Measured on a 10-point scale)	8.3	7.8

P. S. 1

Sponsoring District: Denver Public Schools

Location: Denver (Urban)
Enrollment: 162
Grade Levels: Over age 10
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: School expanded in 1998-99 to accommodate all interested students

Student/Teacher Ratio: 12.5
Percent Minority: 32.7%
Percent Free Lunch: 24.1%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 29.0%
Percent Special Education: 13.6%

MISSION: P.S. 1's mission is to enrich life in the urban core of Denver – to add to its attractiveness, increase its economic viability, enliven its cultural life and bring out its hospitality. P.S. 1 will make its contributions to this mission by enabling young people to work together as a learning community on challenging projects that make a difference in the quality of city life and, in the process, draw students toward higher and higher standards of character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: P.S. 1's program comes from weaving together: student interests, strengths and weaknesses (as developed through Personal Learning Plans), opportunities for learning in the city; staff and volunteer expertise; Colorado Content Standards and other national standards; and P.S. 1 standards relating to character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.

GOVERNANCE: The Urban Learning Community's Board of Directors, comprised of two parents, two administrators and four community members, sets the vision and direction for the school. The Executive Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions and delegates much decision-making to staff and community members.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students must demonstrate that they have developed and can articulate high standards of character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.
- All students must demonstrate that they have acquired "Habits of the Mind," which include critical and creative thinking, anticipatory thinking, reflectiveness and capacities to analyze, synthesize, interpret and evaluate information in many symbol systems.
- 75% of all students who have completed two years of learning at P.S. 1 will be reading at grade level, as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Test.
- At the end of the 1996-97 school year and each year thereafter, 75% of P.S. 1 students will show reading improvement relative to grade or age level standards, as measured by the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) tests.
- At the end of the 1996-97 school year and each year thereafter, 75% of P.S. 1 students will show reading and writing improvement, as measured by alternative assessments developed by P.S. 1 educators.
- 75% of P.S. 1 students will show improvement relative to grade level standards in writing as demonstrated on a jointly agreed writing sample.
- All P.S. 1 students must demonstrate that they have achieved state model content standards through portfolios, knowledge bases, staff judgments, appropriate standardized tests, presentations and performances with school-developed scoring rubrics for each grade or groups of grades that are judged to be valid, reliable, and that provide comparable results to state-developed assessments.
- Given a career/academic plan, all students will demonstrate mastery of appropriate academic and work-place competence prior to graduation.

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MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)		79% of students who have completed two years at P.S. 1 are reading at or above grade level. 66% of students who have completed at least one year at P.S. 1 are reading at or above grade level. Overall, P.S. 1 averages are among the highest in the district. Mean scores for students in 5th, 7th and 8th grades rose between fall 1996 and spring 1997. Mean score for students in the 6th and 9th grades stayed the same.	80% of students who have completed two years at P.S. 1 are reading at or above grade level. Mathematics scores from Spring 1997 to Spring 1998 (entire school) improved 1.26 grade level equivalent. Every grade (except for 6th grade) improved at least one grade level equivalent. Overall, P.S. 1 averages are among the highest in the district. All P.S. 1 grade levels improved more than one grade level equivalent during the 1997-98 school year.
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP) National percentile rank. This test is normed in terms of ages not grades. It provides information about the level of text complexity that the student can comprehend.		**5th** 42% **6th** 53% **7th** 76% **8th** 56% **9th** 60% **10th** 58% **11th** 41%	86% of students improved on the DRP test from November 1997 to November 1998
Parent Satisfaction Percent who agree or strongly agree that learning opportunities meet the needs of students.	92%	95%	78%
Attendance Rate	95%	95%	95%

Note: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

Location: Castle Rock (Suburban)
Enrollment: 353*
Grade Levels: K-8
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 675

Student/Teacher Ratio: 14.3
Percent Minority: 8.5%
Percent Free Lunch: 3.7%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 3.7%
Percent Special Education: 8.8%

*Academy also operates a home school support program that served 24 students in 1997-98.

MISSION: Academy Charter School provides a challenging academic program based on the Core Knowledge Curriculum that promotes Academic Excellence, Character Development and Educational Enthusiasm for its students.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Academy Charter School uses an intensive, hands-on developmental approach to teach the Core Knowledge curriculum. Teachers strive to integrate curriculum/instruction across disciplines while developing students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. Technology and organizational skills are integrated into the curriculum. Each student has an individual learning plan.

GOVERNANCE: A Governing Board (comprised of seven parents) sets policy for the school. The dean of the school is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Each student will show a minimum of one year's growth in all academic areas (or as reasonable for students with exceptional needs).
- Meet or exceed the 65 percentile on composite scores for grades 2-8.
- Attendance rate will attain or exceed 95%.
- 75% of parents will volunteer at least 20 hours per year.
- To meet or exceed the 75 percentile for reading skills according to MEAP.
- Math proficiency scores for grades 4 and 7 will increase to 80% as measured by Terra Nova
- Reading proficiency scores for grades 4 and 7 will increase to 80% as measured by Terra Nova.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
***Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)** National percentile rank National average is 50%	***Composite Score*** 2nd - 8th grade 73		
***Terra Nova** National percentile rank		**Reading Lang. Math** **3rd** 62 53 70 **6th** 72 67 78 **8th** 76 68 71 These scores met or exceeded the average district scores.	A comparison of Terra Nova scores for the same students from the 1996-97 to the 1997-98 school year showed significant improvements for students who scored low in 1996-97. Scores for students who scored high in 1996-97 were mixed.
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 72% proficient or above (75% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 28% proficient or above (46% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 66% proficient or above (70% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 49% proficient or above (47% district average) **Third grade reading:** 89% proficient or above (80% district average)
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) % scoring at proficient level	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 73 89 Info 38 69 ***Math*** Satis. 70 74 Medium 19 23 Low 11 3	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 75 77 Info 34 51 ***Math*** Satis. 72 61 Medium 16 25 Low 13 14 These scores met or exceeded the average district scores.	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 88 71 Info 67 67 ***Math*** Satis. 65 71 Medium 24 19 Low 12 10 These scores met or exceeded the average district scores.
Parent Involvement	10,700 volunteer hours Approximately 90% of parents volunteered	8,500 volunteer hours Approximately 80% of parents volunteered	9,000 volunteer hours Approximately 81% of parents/families volunteered
Parent Satisfaction % of parents who agree that school meets students' needs	95%		
Attendance Rate	96%	96%	

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment of the 1996-97 school year.

CORE KNOWLEDGE CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

Location: Parker (Suburban)
Enrollment: 270
Grade Levels: K-8
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 803

Student/Teacher Ratio: 19.3
Percent Minority: 3.7%
Percent Free Lunch: 1.9%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 1.9%
Percent Special Education: 5.9%

MISSION: We will strive to build a foundation of knowledge and skills that will enable our children to meet the challenges of a global society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Core Knowledge Charter School features a content-driven curriculum based on the Core Knowledge Foundation's materials. Spanish language instruction is provided at every grade. The school emphasizes high standards for academic performance, small class size and parental involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Operating Council, comprised of six parents, two staff members and the Director, sets policy for the school. The Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will perform at the 75th percentile or higher in all content areas as measured by CTBS.
- The school will maintain or exceed a 95% attendance rate.
- 90% of the students will work at or above grade level.
- 80% of parents will meet their obligation of 20+ hours of volunteer time.
- Reading assessment results for fourth and seventh graders will show 80% of students scoring at or above the satisfactory level for both fiction and non-fiction.
- Parents will re-enroll their children at a rate of 90%.
- 90% of existing 8th grade students who have had at least three years of consecutive Core Knowledge Charter School Spanish instruction will qualify for enrollment at the Spanish II level in high school.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)* National percentile rank	*Grade 3* **Reading** 80 **Language** 93 **Math** 95		
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 90% proficient or above (75% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 65% proficient or above (46% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 78% proficient or above (70% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 48% proficient or above (47% district average) **Third grade reading:** 87% proficient or above (80% district average)
Terra Nova* National percentile rank		**Grade 3 6 8** Reading 83 85 65 Language 86 86 73 Math 80 90 61	**Grade 3 6 8** Reading 93 68 48 Language 95 78 55 Math 89 77 41
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)	4th grade: 95% 7th grade: 70% % of students working at satisfactory level; composite score	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 95 100 Info 75 50 ***Math*** Satis. 90 83 Medium 10 11 Low - 5	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 89 83 Info 76 77 ***Math*** Satis. 70 75 Medium 24 17 Low 5 8
Stanford Achievement Test			86% of students in grades 2-8 are reading above grade level.
Parental Involvement	10,700 hours volunteered	7,760 hours volunteered	8,100 hours volunteered
8th grade students who have completed at least three consecutive years of Spanish instruction at CKCS and **who qualify for enrollment in Spanish II in high school**		50% of the graduating class who took the entrance test scores at the Spanish II level.	81% of the graduating class who took the entrance test scores at the Spanish II level
Parent Satisfaction % that stated they are satisfied with school's academic standards	93% are "satisfied" with the school's academic standards.	78% are "pleased" with the school's academic standards.	81% are "pleased" with the school's academic standards.
Attendance Rate	96%	95%	96%

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment as of the 1996-97 school year.

RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

Location:	Parker (Suburban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	20.2
Enrollment:	255	**Percent Minority:**	10.2%
Grade Levels:	K-8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0%
Opening Date:	Fall 1995	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	100	**Percent Special Education:**	8.2%

MISSION: The Renaissance School is a cooperative effort between students, parents and professional educators. Through flexible, multi-age groups and activities involvement in student-centered investigative approaches, students are challenged to develop a solid foundation of knowledge while they become critical thinkers and problem-solvers. The Renaissance Learner takes independent responsibility for his or her learning and can set and achieve goals to produce intellectual, physical and creative products.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Renaissance School evaluates students to determine the learning and information processing styles and develops a Personalized Education Plan for each student. Students learn in multi-age classrooms and multi-lingual environments. Learning is integrated from many subject areas and connects to the real life experiences of students through the use of investigations. The school gives special attention to developing learning opportunities that identify and nurture the creative spark in each child.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors, comprised of five parents, one community representative, two business representatives and two administrators (non-voting), sets policy for the school. The Educational Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- The school will maintain or exceed a 95.5% attendance rate.
- (For 1997-98) Over a three year period, students will demonstrate an improvement of three percentiles the first year and two percentiles for each succeeding year in language and math skills as measured by consecutive Terra Nova scores for the same group of students.
- Students will demonstrate an improvement of 2% on CTBS math scores and MEAP reading scores.
- Terra Nova scores in math and language for 1996-97 will be raised 2 percentile points, comparing grades 4-8 with grades 3-7. (For the 1997-98 school year, scores will increase by 3 percentile points.)

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) National percentile rank	*3rd grade* *6th* **Reading** 71.8 55.3 **Language** 53.0 61.0 **Math** 58.0 53.7 **Composite** 62.3 63.0		
Terra Nova* National percentile rank		**Reading Lang. Math** **3rd** 69.0 64.5 84.0 **4th** 72.5 66.5 73.0 **5th** 68.0 53.0 60.0 **6th** 59.7 61.0 44.0 **7th** 75.0 61.7 62.0	**Reading Lang. Math** **3rd** 67 60 75 **4th** 84 83 61 **5th** 82 80 69 **6th** 61 63 60 **7th** n/a due to small sample size
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 68% proficient or above (75% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 45% proficient or above (46% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 61% proficient or above (70% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 48% proficient or above (47% district average) **Third grade reading:** 74% proficient or above (80% district average)
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) % scoring at proficient level	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 87.5 Info. 46.9 ***Math*** Satis. 50 n/a Medium 18.8 Low 31.3	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 91.7 82 Info. 83.3 52 ***Math*** Satis. 56 Medium 36 n/a Low 8	
Attendance Rate	94.54%	94.67%	92.3%
Student Exhibits	Student oral and multimedia presentations demonstrate increases in research and presentation skills between term 1 and 4 for all grade levels, K-7.	Student oral and multimedia presentations demonstrate increases in research and presentation skills between term 1 and 4 for all grade levels, K-7.	Student oral and multimedia presentations demonstrate increases in research and presentation skills between term 1 and 4 for all grade levels, K-8.

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment as of the 1996-97 school year.

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

Location: Durango (Rural)
Enrollment: 128
Grade Levels: K-12
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 0

Student/Teacher Ratio: 23.3
Percent Minority: 20.3%
Percent Free Lunch: 19.5 %
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 23.4%
Percent Special Education: 15.6%

MISSION: The mission of the Community of Learners is to provide a positive, mutually respectful environment in which students, parents and teachers share a commitment to an experience of optimal, individualized learning that leads to a lifelong love of learning, as well as a high level of personal achievement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Community of Learners features student-centered and self-directed learning, individual learning plans and learning in the community. Students participate in service learning and internships. The school combines a commitment to high standards for basic skills with a desire to rethink the total school experience, including the traditional roles of stakeholders, the nature of curriculum and school governance.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of five parents, two staff members and two community members, makes policy decisions for the school. The Administrator/Lead Teacher and Team Teachers make daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 100% of Community of Learners students will utilize an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) created by the "triad" – the student, a parent and a COL teacher/advisor. The ILP will articulate goals appropriate to the developmental and academic level of the students.
- 90% of Community of Learners students will reach a satisfactory level of achievement of their individual goals and will complete, to a satisfactory level, the learning experiences which are outlined in their ILPs.
- Community of Learners will utilize the Colorado state content standards and the state mandated assessments to further academic, social and personal growth of students and to help the parents, students and teachers set goals for their students.
- Community of Learners will demonstrate proficiency in six spheres of knowledge: Community/Career Involvement, Global Awareness, Our Natural World, Interpersonal Growth, Health and Well-Being, Communication Skills and Creative Process.
- 100% of Community of Learners students will participate in service learning experiences on a regular and ongoing basis.
- In order to create a healthy, safe and nurturing climate for students, COL will emphasize the personal growth, learning, physical health and psychological well-being of staff, parents and other adult community members.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form K and L)* Grade level equivalent	*Composite Score* 6th grade: 7.3 7th: 7.8 8th: 9.6 9th: 9.7	*Composite Score* 3rd grade 3.63 4th 4.67 5th 5.73 6th 5.96 7th: 8.93 8th: 8.8 9th: 12.85	*Composite Score* 4th 4.5 5th 6.5 6th 8.1 7th: 6.9 8th: 10.2 9th: 10 10th 10.8 11th-12th 11.9 In 1997-98, ITBS scores for students who attended Community of Learners for two or more years increased by 1 grade level equivalent (GLE) for 67% of students 2 GLEs for 31% of students More than 3 GLEs for 11% of students
Percentage of Students Who Participate in Service Learning			100%, representing 3,108 hours of service
District 9-R Writing Assessment (replaces Stanford Writing Assessment per district policy)			Mean Raw Score on 2-12 scale: 8th grade: 5.8 11th grade: 8
Stanford Writing Assessment National percentile rank	*Holistic Score* 8th grade: 63	*Holistic Score* 8th grade: 44.24	
Progress of Students on Individual Learning Programs Students at COL receive credits only when they **completely** achieve the goal. (In contrast to receiving a grade "C" for mastering only 70% of the material.)	90% of COL students have successfully completed and transcripted the learning experiences in which they enrolled	As of June 30, 1997, 72% of COL students have successfully transcripted 100% of the coursework in which they enrolled. NOTE: This number is based on a significantly revised and more rigorous standard for completion than the standard applied for the 1995-96 school year.	As of June 30, 1998, 55% of COL students have successfully transcripted 100% of the coursework, 43% have work that is still in progress and 2% received "No credit" for their coursework.
Parent Involvement Number of volunteer hours	2,953	5,017	3,323
Attendance	na	95%	93%

NOTE: CSAP results are not reported for this school because fewer than 16 students took the test in each year.

Note: Researchers from the University of Southern California completed a third party evaluation of the school in 1997-98. The report is full of information and accomplishments that cannot be presented in this report due to space and format limitations. Copies of the evaluation are available from the school.

THE EXCEL SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

Location: Durango (Rural)
Enrollment: 123
Grade Levels: 6-12
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: not available

Student/Teacher Ratio: 13.4
Percent Minority: 13.0%
Percent Free Lunch: 4.9 %
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 9.8%
Percent Special Education: 13.0%

MISSION: The EXCEL School, a school of choice, is a dynamic educational environment whose participants are willing to take risks as they foster educational excellence and cultivate personal, intellectual and emotional growth, responsibility and citizenship. The school will be a safe, nurturing environment which values the individual, recognizes diversity of learning styles and teaching methods and encourages innovation in teaching while maintaining high academic standards. In cooperation with Fort Lewis College, EXCEL will serve as a professional development center for the region.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The EXCEL School's curriculum emphasizes basic skills, critical thinking and problem solving, technology and community service. Every student has an individual learning plan, which serves as a three-way contract between the parent, teacher and the student.

GOVERNANCE: The School's Governing Board, comprised of two community members and five parents, makes policy decisions. The principal is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master the Durango School District standards.
- Students will make progress toward agreed upon contracts to excel (individual learning plans).
- Students will achieve at or above grade level.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of 100%.
- Parents will participate in the school at a rate of 95%.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Average grade level equivalent	6th grade - 8.4 7th grade - 9.75 8th grade - 10.7 **Composite Scores** 75% of the student body demonstrated improvement on ITBS test scores	6th grade - 7.8 7th grade - 8.5 8th grade - 11.2 **Composite Scores** **National Percentile Rank:** (National average is 50%) **Grade 6 7 8** Reading 68 62 70 Lang. 50 48 64 Math 59 53 56 Composite 63 56 68	Not reported
District Math Standards Assessment (% of students who are proficient in standards for five domains: measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra and statistics)	**42%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **35%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards **4%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards **7%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **7%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards **1%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards	**40%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards **15%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards **9%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards **13%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards Excel mean raw score: 54.3 District mean raw score: 53.7	Not reported
Stanford Writing Assessment National percentile rank, holistic score	8th grade: 72	8th grade: 77	Not reported
Iowa Test of Educational Development (11th grade students)		National Percentile Rank, composite score: 44 Grade Level Equivalent: 12.66	Not reported
Attendance Rate	93%	95%	Not reported
Parent Involvement	3,200 hours volunteered 95% of parents volunteered	2,086 hours volunteered 72% of parents volunteered	Not reported
Student Participation in Contracts to Excel	100%	100%	Not reported

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

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EAGLE COUNTY CHARTER

Sponsoring District: Eagle County School District

Location: Wolcott (Rural)
Enrollment: 162
Grade Levels: 5-9
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 500

Student/Teacher Ratio: Not reported
Percent Minority: 7.4%
Percent Free Lunch: 0 %
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 0%
Percent Special Education: 6.2%

MISSION: In recognition of human diversity of learning styles, the Eagle County Charter Academy will provide a dynamic educational environment of choice for all learners. Our educators will focus on the individual to help students achieve a high standard of academic performance by employing innovative and flexible teaching methods and cultivating personal growth and flexibility.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school stresses strong core academics, parental involvement, block scheduling, small class size, personalized learning plans and mentors.

GOVERNANCE: The school has a seven member board (five parents and two staff) that makes policy decisions. The dean is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 100% of students will achieve at least a 75% grade point average.
- 75% of students will score above 50 percentile on standardized tests.
- 95% of students will demonstrate at least 9 months academic growth each year.
- Students will achieve an average score of 3 on district writing and math assessments.
- School attendance will exceed 95%.
- The annual school climate survey will reflect 85% positive responses.
- 75% of all students will read at or above grade level.
- 100% parent attendance for fall conferences.
- 100% of students (who remain in the district) will return to the school for the following year.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) core test series National percentile rank National average is 50%	*Fall 95* *Spring 96* 5th grade 58 6th 77 81 7th 73 74 8th 61 63	*Reading* *Language* 5th 55 48 6th 74 70 7th 82 75 8th 77 67 *Math* *Composite* 5th 56 52 6th 73 73 7th 79 79 8th 68 71 **(Spring 1997)**	*Reading* *Language* 5th 65 66 6th 61 62 7th 70 70 8th 76 79 *Math* *Composite* 5th 69 67 6th 64 61 7th 68 71 8th 74 81 **(Spring 1998)**
District Writing Assessment (Average Score on 5-point test; 5 is highest score)	3.27 (Sept. 1995) 3.74 (April 1996) 95% of all students receive a score of 3 or above.	3.78 (Spring 1997)	
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (complete battery) % of students who perform at, above or below grade level	*at or above* *below* 5th - 62% / 79% 38% / 21% 6th- 66% / 79% 34% / 21% 7th - 69% / 87% 31% / 13% 8th- 59% / 75% 41% / 25% (Fall 1995/Spring1996)	Not administered in Spring 1997	Not administered in Spring 1998
Grade Point Average % of students maintaining 75% GPA or better	89.35%	89.35% (66% maintained 85% or better)	90.25%
Attendance	94.98%	92%	91%
Parent Satisfaction % who gave an overall approval rating	95%	98%	97%
Parent attendance at fall conferences	100%	100%	100%
Parent Involvement Number of volunteer hours	3,500	4,500	5,300 hours
Re-enrollment rate	99%	98%	96%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

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MARBLE CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Gunnison School District

Location:	Marble (Rural)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	9.5
Enrollment:	19	**Percent Minority:**	7.4%
Grade Levels:	K-8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0 %
Opening Date:	Fall 1995	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	0	**Percent Special Education:**	15.8%

MISSION: The mission of the Marble Charter School is to provide guided opportunities for students to realize high levels of academic achievement within a learning environment that encompasses natural and cultural resources from the community. The school forms its instructional program to exceed district standards and to provide each student with frequent self-rewarding successes. Marble Charter School expects its students, with full support of their families, to strive for excellence in all aspects of this learning process.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM:
"The Marble Charter School will respect each child as a unique individual. Respect allows and promotes choice, trust and independence. Respect accepts children where they are and encourages and congratulates them for their efforts. We believe that a child who feels respected will feel secure and be able to take risks.

"We believe that one of our basic roles, as a school, is to encourage an attitude of questioning. Thus, our own behavior should model the use of observation, questioning and experimenting as a means of gaining knowledge.

"We will encourage and foster creativity, enabling children to be successful at their own levels.

"We believe that students learn best when the curriculum is integrated and taught holistically. Therefore, we will organize our instructional time and materials around topics, which lend themselves naturally to the integration of curriculum content areas.

"In order to accomplish this, we will pool our personnel resources. We will work cooperatively within the community, encouraging each and every one to participate in the teaching of our students."

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board comprised of six parents, one staff member and two community representatives, makes policy decisions for the school. The Head Teacher makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):
- Identify any potentially "at risk" student.
- Meet or exceed district standards in both the sponsoring district and Roaring Fork School District.
- Each student will have an individualized learning plan that will help him or her successfully develop academic skills as well as the self-esteem and independence necessary for continued educational success.
- The school will achieve an attendance rate that meets or exceeds that of the average elementary school in the district.
- The school will measure student achievement by establishing a baseline the first semester. The goal is to demonstrate increases in the annual median test scores in all subjects for at least 70% of the students.
- Parents will participate at a rate of 90%; the total amount of volunteer time will exceed 10% of paid staff time.

MEASURE	**1995-96**	**1996-97**	**1997-98**
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	"across the board improvements" Baseline data showed that 90% of all students entering Marble Charter School were performing below grade level.	Average ITBS scores improved more than one grade level for all but four students. 75% of students are performing below the grade level expectations expressed in the state content standards.	
NWEA Levels Test			In the period from December 1997 to April 1998, 78% of students showed more than a half year's growth in reading, and 44% showed more than a full year's growth in math, 78% of students showed more than a half year's growth in reading, and 75% showed more than a full year's growth.
Parent Involvement		100% have contributed at least 5-10 hours; many families contribute that much time each week.	100% of families contribute time to the school.
Attendance Rate	96%	96%	91.5%

NOTE: CSAP results are not reported for this school because fewer than 16 students took the test in each year.

COLLEGIATE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL*

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District

Location: Littleton (suburban)
Enrollment: 137
Grade Levels: 7-12
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 50

Student/Teacher Ratio: 17:1
Percent Minority: 4.4%
Percent Free Lunch: 0 %
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: .7%
Percent Special Education: 13.9 %

* Collegiate Academy operated as Sci Tech Academy Charter School during its first three years of operation.

MISSION: Collegiate Academy, a prototype 21st century school, uses state-of-the-art technology to provide a sound educational environment grounded in the fundamental skills of a traditional college preparatory curriculum. The environment will be individually structured to optimize each student's growth, so that all students, including "at-risk" pupils and those who are challenged with learning difficulties, will acquire a first-class education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Collegiate Academy's curriculum philosophy emphasizes science and math, cultural literacy, communication skills, technology articulation and a balanced liberal arts approach. The curriculum is highly interdisciplinary, connecting facts, skills and processes as they are connected in the real world. Scheduling is flexible; emphasis is on achievement, not time spent. The school day is extended, from 7 am to 5 p.m. Students have some control over how they meet the school's academic requirements.

GOVERNANCE: Collegiate Academy's Board of Directors, comprised of seven parents, one staff member and two students (who are non-voting members), set policy for the school. The school's Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will complete Collegiate Academy's requirements at the "Mastery" level (grade A or B) and 20% of all achievement will earn a "Distinguished" rating (grade A+). These requirements will incorporate state and local requirements for graduation.
- Each student will be encouraged to attempt one Advanced Placement exam.
- The school will work to increase the number of students doing individual study, large projects and integrated learning and reduce the number of traditional class periods.
- 60% of students will attain a GPA of 3.0 or better.
- 100% of students will graduate.
- The school will attain or exceed a 90% attendance rate.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) National percentile rank 50% is the national average	***Middle School:*** Reading: on par with district norms (56/56) Math: 8% above district norms (68/60) ***High School*** Reading: 9% above district norms (69/60) Math: 1% above district norms (61/60)	**Grade 7 Grade 10** Reading 63 59 Writing 43 52 Math 54 45 Battery 52 49	**Grade 7 Grade 10** Reading 63 63 Writing 53 56 Math 58 63 Battery 57 61
PSAT Results National percentile rank (Test was taken by college-bound students in October 96. Results reported include only those students who have attended the school for two or more years)	—	Verbal: 63 Math: 56	Not available
Percentage of Students with GPA	34% of students have a GPA of 2.5 or better	75% of students have a GPA of 3.0 or better	75% of students have a GPA of 3.0 or better
Graduation Rate	100%	100%	75%
Attendance	91%	94%	89%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

COMMUNITY INVOLVED CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District

Location:	Lakewood (suburban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	19.0
Enrollment:	259	**Percent Minority:**	15.1%
Grade Levels:	K-12	**Percent Free Lunch:**	13.9%
Opening Date:	Fall 1994	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	18.5%
Waiting List:	125	**Percent Special Education:**	16.6%

MISSION: To provide a personalized Pre-K-12 education in a nurturing and challenging environment which develops the whole person through the advisory system, choice, self-direction, experiential learning, shared responsibility and lifelong learning.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Upon entering CICS, all students are assigned a staff advisor with whom they, along with their parents, develop personal learning plans. The total student population is divided into three developmental areas, or "seasons": Season One (preschool -3), Season Two (grades 4-6), Seasons Three, Four and Five (grades 7-12). Movement from one Season to another requires that students demonstrate that they have met certain expectations and completed a "passage." The Season expectations are clustered into the Intellectual, Personal, Social and Creative Domains. They consist of 48 discrete learning outcomes. The passages are personally challenging projects developed by students to demonstrate their ability to apply their skills in the real world. CICS's primary instructional method is experiential. The school year is divided into 4-week blocks. During each block, a student enrolls in one "intensive," or interdisciplinary, thematic, multiage experience, often culminating in an extended excursion and encompassing many content areas as well as service learning.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three staff members, three students, three parents, an administrator and two community members, sets policy for the school. The principal and team leaders make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master basic skills in literacy and numeracy, including artistic literacy.
- The school's curriculum for all levels will comply with the Jefferson County Model Content standards.
- Each student will develop the inner qualities essential to joyous and effective learning and living, to include: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-initiative, self-reliance, self-discipline, self-knowledge, self-evaluation and self-respect.
- Each student will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and practices which promote social, emotional, physical, spiritual growth and mental health, as well as intellectual and creative development.
- Each student's portfolio will show regular growth and improvement.
- Improve retention rate (by 3% for 1997-98) and double the number of graduated students (to 20 for 1997-98 school year).

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills** **(ITBS short form)** National percentile rank National average is 50%	***Grade*** **3 5 7** *Reading* 19 37 35 *Language* 10 27 15 *Math* 24 24 27 Battery Total 16 24 22	***Grade*** **3 5** *Reading* 28 49 *Language* 32 53 *Math* 38 41 **Grade 7 10** *Reading* 55 69 *Language* 47 53 *Math* 53 32	Insufficient numbers of students in grades 3, 5 and 7 took the ITBS for the scores to be publicly reported. **Grade 10** *Reading* 47 *Language* 36 *Math* 52
Number of Graduating Students	5	5	8
Parent Involvement (Number of Volunteer Hours)	1,350	1,200	1,200
Retention Rate (% of students who continued their education at CICS the following school year)	58.2%	63.4%	78.0%
Attendance Rate	86.5%	90.2%	85.2% (Elementary - 90% Middle - 87% High School - 83%)

NOTE: CSAP results are not reported for this school because fewer than 16 students took the test in each year.

** The school does not consider the ITBS to be a valid measure of what students know and are able to do. Standardized tests, such as the ITBS, do not deal with 75% of the school's curriculum: social, creative and personal skills.

EXCEL ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District

Location:	Arvada (suburban)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	15.3
Enrollment:	138	**Percent Minority:**	3.6%
Grade Levels:	K - 8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	1.4%
Opening Date:	Fall 1995	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	5.1%
Waiting List:	33	**Percent Special Education:**	5.8 %

MISSION: The mission of Excel Academy is to provide an opportunity for children living in the North area of Jefferson County to benefit from an integrated and challenging educational environment that prepares them to be independent, critical thinkers in the 21st century. Excel Academy will create and foster a learning laboratory for mastery of basic skills, with appreciation and respect for individual learning styles and needs. The Academy will also offer a year-round educational setting to promote uninterrupted learning which will give impetus to better performance, both on tests and other alternative assessments. Teachers will promote excellence, inspire children to reach their full potential, and view all students as gifted. Each student will have an "Individually Guided Education Plan." Parental involvement will be an essential element in the school's overall program.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Excel Academy instruction reflects the "Five Standards of Authentic Instruction," developed at Wisconsin Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, and Bloom's Taxonomy. The school uses enrichment clusters (non-graded groups of students who share common interests) to promote real-world problem solving, self-concept and cooperativeness.

GOVERNANCE: The Executive Committee comprised of three parents, one administrator and one community member sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 75% of all students will achieve mastery of reading, writing and math standards at their grade level.
- Continue to refine the student learning plan (SLP) document as a clear, detailed record of students' progress toward mastery of content standards and of enrichment and affective goals.
- Maintain daily average attendance rate of 96%. (Goal for 1997-98 is 94%.)

New Performance Goals for 2001 (Adopted in 1998):

- 90% of all students, K-3, will read on or above grade level as measured by the DRA. (Baseline data is not available as 1998 will be the first year this assessment is administered.)
- The number of students scoring in the proficient or advanced range of the CSAP reading subtest will increase by 5% per year for students in 3rd, 4th and 7th grade. (Baseline: 67% of Excel 4th graders scored at the proficient level or above on the 4/9 CSAP.)
- 55% of students in grades 2-8 will score "proficient" or "advanced" on the 6-trait writing assessment. (4/98 baseline is 40%.)
- The percentage of students, grades 3-8, who perform at or above grade level in math achievement as measured by the ITBS will increase to 87%. (4/98 baseline is 77%.)
- 80% of all students will have less than 10 absences (excused or unexcused) per year. (1997-98 benchmark: 52%.)
- The number of referrals from Session 2 to Session 4 will decrease by 30% in each school year. (1997-98 benchmark: 23% reduction in referrals.)

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (National percentile rank) 50% is the national average	**Grade 3 4 5 6** Reading 53 58 58 74 Writing 53 57 52 73 Math 55 66 52 68 Battery 56 63 52 72 **(Fall 1995 baseline)**	**Grade 3 5 6 7** Reading 43 48 68 74 Writing 41 44 64 64 Math 37 50 55 74 Battery 38 51 63 71 **(Spring 1997)**	**Grade 3 4 5** Reading 37 55 76 Writing 75 60 65 Math 70 34 54 Battery 75 49 69 **Grade 6 7 8** Reading 60 59 84 Writing 60 64 64 Math 62 53 67 Battery 64 59 72 **(Spring 1998)**
Iowa Test of Basic Skills Analysis of Change - Measure progress of same cohort of students over time		**Grade 3 5** Reading 37(49) 49(65) Writing 46(53) 51(57) Math 47(54) 50(55) Battery 42(52) 50(56) (Analysis of change from **April 1995 to April 1997**. Scores are shown for Excel and (Jefferson County School District)	**Grade 6 7** Reading 44 56 Writing 56 59 Math 48 52 Battery 52 56 (Analysis of change from **April 1997 to April 1998**. Scores are shown for Excel students only.)
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)*			**3rd grade reading:** 81% proficient or above (71% district average)
Parent Involvement	Not available	8,878 volunteer hours contributed 100% of families participated	7,333 volunteer hours contributed 100% of families participated
Parent Satisfaction % of respondents whose expectations were met or exceeded	Emphasizes rigorous academics: 65% Provides for individual learning styles: 53% Teachers promote excellence: 71% Extends classroom into community: 73%	Emphasizes rigorous academics: 86% Provides for individual learning styles: 68% Teachers promote excellence: 92% Extends classroom into community: 88%	Emphasizes rigorous academics: 88% Provides for individual learning styles: 89% Teachers promote excellence: 81% Extends classroom into community: 89%
Attendance	96%	94%	K-6: 95% 7-8: 94%

NOTE: 4th grade CSAP results are not reported for this school because fewer than 16 students took the test in each year.

JEFFERSON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL - ELEMENTARY

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District

Location: Broomfield (suburban)
Enrollment: 280
Grade Levels: K - 6
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 1,100

Student/Teacher Ratio: 16.6
Percent Minority: 5.7%
Percent Free Lunch: 1.8%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 3.9%
Percent Special Education: 7.4%

MISSION: The mission of Jefferson Academy is to establish an environment where students attain their highest academic and character potential. This mission will be accomplished through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program, in the context of discipline and respect, and a high degree of parental involvement.

VISION STATEMENT: Through the cooperation of parents, teachers, students and the educational and business communities, Jefferson Academy will create a learning environment that engenders growth in character, academic achievement, and the love of learning, resulting in responsible, productive citizens.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Jefferson Academy uses the Core Knowledge Foundation's Scope and Sequence and a fundamental, "back-to-basics" approach. The school emphasizes the teaching of basic skills with a traditional and conventional approach in a self-contained educational environment. The entire class generally works as a single group on grade level material with ability grouping occurring as necessary. Strict discipline and order is maintained.

GOVERNANCE: A Board of Directors (comprised of six parents and the Principal) is responsible for establishing school policy and for all aspects of the school. The Principal, in consultation with staff, makes daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Reading and language scores will improve a minimum of five national percentile points.
- Achieve an average mean attainment level of 80% or better in all subjects for all grade levels on standardized tests.
- The school will maintain an attendance rate of 95% or better.
- 75% of students performing at least one year above grade level will show 9-months academic growth.
- 90% of parents will re-enroll their children in the school.
- Volunteer hours will exceed 10% of the total staffing hours.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form G) National percentile rank National average is 50% This test is administered in the spring	*Vocabulary* *Reading* 1st grade 84 82 2nd 70 66 3rd 71 64 4th 71 71 5th 73 70 6th 70 70 *Lang.Spelling* *Math* 1st grade 64 91 2nd 80 71 3rd 83 77 4th 79 83 5th 74 78 6th 71 70	*Vocabulary* *Reading* K 71 76 1st grade 83 74 2nd 83 83 3rd 70 71 4th 71 73 5th 72 80 6th 77 76 *Lang.Spelling* *Math* K 59 73 1st grade 88 86 2nd 89 91 3rd 82 79 4th 81 85 5th 79 84 6th 75 77	*Vocabulary* *Reading* K 78 82 1st grade 84 76 2nd 83 83 3rd 74 74 4th 70 71 5th 77 75 6th 72 79 *Lang.Spelling* *Math* K 68 76 1st grade 96 71 2nd 89 81 3rd 85 84 4th 76 75 5th 77 87 6th 76 79
Colorado Student Achievement Test (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 70% proficient or above (62% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 57% proficient or above (37% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 73% proficient or above (64% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 61% proficient or above (43% district average) **Third grade reading:** 94% proficient or above (71% district average)
ITBS - Longitudinal Data National percentile rank, composite score		Students who have completed **4, 5 & 6th grades** at Jefferson Academy (JA): Fall 94: 40 / Spring 97: 76 Students who have completed **3rd, 4th & 5th** grades at JA: Fall 94: 37 / Spring 97: 81 Students who have completed **2nd, 3rd and 4th** grades at JA: Fall 94: 31 / Spring 97: 79 Students who have completed **1st, 2nd & 3rd** grades at JA: Spring 95: 71/Spring 97:77 Students who have completed **1st & 2nd** grades at JA: Spring 96: 88/Spring 97:87	Students who have completed **3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th grades** at Jefferson Academy (JA): Fall 94: 37 / Spring 98: 79 Students who have completed **2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th** grades at JA: Fall 94: 31 / Spring 98: 82 Students who have completed **1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th** grades at JA: Spring 95:71/Spring 97: 75 Students who have completed **1st, 2nd & 3rd** grades at JA: Spring 96:88/Spring 98: 83 Students who have completed **1st & 2nd** grades at JA: Spring 97:85/Spring 98: 86
Parent Involvement Volunteer Hours	7,325 (25% of total staffing hours)	9,121 (22% of total staffing hours)	10,710 (25% of total staffing hours)
Parent Satisfaction % of parents who agree that the school meets children's needs	98%	99%	99%
Re-enrollment	98%	98%	99%
Attendance	96.4%	97.1%	95.3%

JEFFERSON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL - JUNIOR HIGH

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District

Location: Broomfield (suburban)
Enrollment: 56
Grade Levels: 7-8
Opening Date: Fall 1996
Waiting List: 73

Student/Teacher Ratio: 16.6
Percent Minority: 3.6%
Percent Free Lunch: 3.6%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 7.1%
Percent Special Education: not available

MISSION: The mission of Jefferson Academy Junior High is to establish an environment where students attain their highest academic and character potential. This mission will be accomplished through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program, in the context of discipline and respect, and a high degree of parental involvement. Additionally, this mission will be accomplished through the use of the Core Knowledge Sequence (as researched and reported by Dr. E.D. Hirsch of the University of Virginia) and a fundamental, "back-to-knowledge" approach. This Core Knowledge Goal will be supplemented by the Junior High matrixing Core Knowledge with the state standards and assessment goals for grades 5-8.

VISION STATEMENT: Through the cooperation of parents, teachers, students and the educational and business communities, Jefferson Academy Junior High will create a learning environment that engenders growth in character, academic achievement, and the love of learning, resulting in responsible, productive citizens.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Jefferson Academy Junior High incorporates the state's academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography and science with the seventh and eighth grade Core Knowledge Foundation Sequence. It uses a coordinated humanities approach to the Core Knowledge Curriculum which was initiated by the book *Cultural Literacy* written by E.D. Hirsch. Coordinated Humanities is mixing the study of literature, history, geography, government, economics, music and art along a history timeline. Other subjects such as science and technology are taught through interdisciplinary instructional units. Writing is incorporated throughout the academic program.

GOVERNANCE: A Board of Directors (comprised of six parents and the Principal) is responsible for establishing school policy and for all aspects of the school. The Principal, in consultation with staff, makes daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Reading and language scores of students who are continuously enrolled will improve a minimum of three national percentile points based on the NCE mean for the ITBS.
- 75% or more of students in grades 7 and 8 will be able to create and produce a product using visual, audio or printed means that relates to or supports the curriculum.
- The school will maintain an attendance rate of 95% or better.
- 75% of students will attain 75% or better on basic skills scores (reading, writing, math) as measured by the ITBS, national percentile rank.

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MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - National percentile rank National average is 50%	7th Reading 63 Integrated Writing 63 Math 66 Composite 74(63) 64	7th 8 Reading 70 (58) 68 Integrated Writing 78 (64) 68 Math 71 (63) 71 Composite 74(63) 70 Science 85% 71% Soc. Studies 79% 74% 7th grades scores are shown both for Jefferson Academy and for the (Jefferson County School District)
Percentage of students in grades 7 and 8 who created and produced a product using visual, audio or printed means that relates to or supports the curriculum.		90%
Attendance Rate		94.2%
Re-enrollment Rate		90%
Parent Satisfaction % of parents who agree that the school meets their children's needs		98%
Parent Involvement Number of hours volunteered by parents or family members		1,927 hours (50% of families participated)

NOTE: This school does not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

LEWIS PALMER CHARTER ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Lewis Palmer School District

Location:	Monument (rural)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	20.8
Enrollment:	268	**Percent Minority:**	9.3%
Grade Levels:	preK-8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	220	**Percent Special Education:**	4.5%

MISSION: The mission of the Lewis Palmer Charter Academy is to improve pupil learning by creating a charter school with high, rigorous standards in a friendly, caring positive learning environment. The Academy's emphasis will be on the "Five R's" – reading, writing, arithmetic, respect and responsibility.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The setting offers traditional-type classroom with the basic subjects taught at all grade levels. The Core Knowledge Sequence provides a coherent, grade-by-grade (K-6) content-specific curriculum guide. Both the skill-based standards of Lewis Palmer School District 38 and the state model content standards are aligned for use with the Core Knowledge Sequence. Clear knowledge goals, smaller student/teacher ratios, individualized math and reading programs, and implementation methods differentiate the curriculum at the Lewis Palmer Charter Academy from other District 38 schools.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board consists of seven parents, a teacher and the principal. The teacher and principal serve in a non-voting capacity. The Governing Board is responsible for policy decisions and the principal makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter application and school improvement plans)

- Students will exceed national standards for their grade level.
- The school will maintain an attendance rate of at least 95%
- All students will achieve a minimum of one grade level advancement during each school year.
- All students "at risk" for not achieving at least 70% in their course work will be identified and a corrective strategy with be established in consultation with the students' parents.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - **Grade level equivalent** Data shown for K-1st grade are Core totals and for grades 2-8 are Composite totals. Tests were administered in the spring of the academic year.	K 1.2 1st 2.6 2nd 3.1 3rd 4.3 4th 6.1 5th 7.4 6th 9.6 7th 9.5 8th 13.4	K 1.2 1st 2.5 2nd 3.3 3rd 4.3 4th 6.1 5th 7.4 6th 9.6 7th 9.5 8th 13.4
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)	**Fourth grade reading:** 79% proficient or above (78% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 63% proficient or above (48% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 80% proficient or above (78% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 70% proficient or above (49% district average) **Third grade reading:** 88% proficient or above (85% district average)
Attendance Rate	95%	94%
Parent Participation		10,000 hours volunteered by parents/families 89% of families participated

LITTLETON CHARTER ACADEMY
Sponsoring District: Littleton School District

Location: Littleton (Suburban)
Enrollment: 450
Grade Levels: K-8
Opening Date: Fall 1996
Waiting List: 928

Student/Teacher Ratio: 23.7
Percent Minority: 4.9%
Percent Free Lunch: 3.3%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 3.8%
Percent Special Education: 4.4%

MISSION: The mission of Littleton Academy is to provide, within the Littleton community, a content-rich, academically rigorous education with a well-defined, sequential curriculum in a safe, orderly and caring environment.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school's curriculum is based on the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence and emphasizes content skills in the development of the whole student. Core subject areas are:
Reading: Open Court in K-5, SRA, Core Knowledge literature
Language Arts: Medallion, Spalding (K-5), Warriner's (6-8)
Math: Saxon Math
Science: Core Knowledge topics.
Social Studies: Core Knowledge topics – American History, World Civilization and Geography
Spanish: Full instruction in grades 6-8, Introduction in grades 1-5.
Instruction also is provided in Computers, Art, Music and Physical Education.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board is comprised of seven parents elected by the parent body. The Board is responsible for oversight of all school operations and determining the school policies. The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter application and school improvement plans)

- Littleton Academy students will be expected to achieve mastery of the curriculum content. The performance target is that student grades will average 80% or better on tests of curriculum material.
- Littleton Academy students in grades 1-8 will take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) each spring. The students will show an improvement in scores for all grade levels in all subject areas.
- Littleton Academy performance on the ITBS will meet or exceed ITBS results for the Littleton Public School District.
- The average Littleton Academy score will exceed the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) results for Littleton School District and Colorado in every content area tested.
- Littleton Academy will meet all requirements of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act.
- Students who are found consistently working below grade level will be identified and will have a special plan developed for them, with input from their parents. Students who are found consistently to be working significantly above the class performance level will be identified and will have a special plan developed for them, with input from their parents.
- Littleton Academy will attain an attendance rate of 95% or better.
- Littleton Academy will maintain a stable enrollment rate of 96% of eligible students who will continue at the school through 8th grade graduation.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - Grade Level Equivalent Tests were administered in the spring of the academic year.	**Reading** **Language** K 1.6 1.9 1st 2.1 2.1 2nd 3.8 4.2 3rd 5.0 5.3 4th 5.9 6.3 5th 7.1 7.4 6th 9.2 9.8 7th 10.3 10.8 8th 11.9 12.3 **Math** **Core** K 1.7 1.7 1st 2.2 2.1 2nd 3.8 3.9 3rd 5.2 4.9 4th 5.9 6.0 5th 7.2 7.2 6th 9.2 9.4 7th 10.7 10.5 8th 12.3 12.2	**Reading** **Language** K na na 1st 2.9 2.6 2nd 3.4 3.5 3rd 5.1 4.8 4th 6.2 6.5 5th 7.0 7.6 6th 8.6 8.3 7th 10.7 11.5 8th 12.1 12.6 **Math** **Core** K na na 1st 2.5 2.6 2nd 3.5 3.5 3rd 5.3 4.9 4th 5.9 6.0 5th 7.5 7.3 6th 9.0 8.9 7th 10.9 10.9 8th 12.7 12.4 Median growth for all grades from May 1997 to May 1998 is 1.4 (one year, four months)
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)	**Fourth grade reading:** 71% proficient or above (72% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 54% proficient or above (47% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 78% proficient or above (72% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 60% proficient or above (54% district average) **Third grade reading:** 76% proficient or above (75% district average)
Mastery of Curriculum Content	Class means per class/subject ranged from 78% to 94% at the end of the school year.	Class means per class/subject ranged from 70% to 98% at the end of the school year.
Attendance Rate	97%	98%
Retention Rate	93%	88%
Parent Satisfaction	97%- Satisfied with what their children are being taught 90%-Satisfied with the way their children are being taught 94%-Agree that Littleton Academy meets child's educational needs	98%- Satisfied with what their children are being taught 90%-Satisfied with the way their children are being taught 94%-Agree that Littleton Academy meets child's educational needs

CRESTONE CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Moffat Consolidated School District

Location: Crestone (rural)
Enrollment: 47
Grade Levels: 1-8
Opening Date: Fall 1995
Waiting List: 0

Student/Teacher Ratio: 15.7
Percent Minority: 31.9%
Percent Free Lunch: 12.8%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 19.1%
Percent Special Education: 0%

MISSION: The mission of Crestone Charter School is to provide a stimulating experiential program that, in a creatively structured atmosphere, nurtures each student's sense of wonder and natural desire to learn. Emphasizing academic excellence and uniqueness of character, we strive to inspire healthy responsibility with self, community and environment, both locally and globally.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Crestone emphasizes experiential and integrated learning, using multi-age groups and thematic units. Each student has an Individual Learning Plan that helps students, teachers and parents set meaningful goals for achievement. The daily schedule is designed to support interdisciplinary curriculum and the flexibility needed for tutoring, mentorships, independent study, community service and self-expression.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Council, comprised of three parents, two community members and one administrator (in a non-voting capacity), sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- To offer an innovative educational program of academic excellence that integrates body, mind, emotion and spirit.
- To provide a learning environment that encourages self-esteem and respects the experiences, talents and uniqueness of every student.
- To prepare each student to be a lifelong learner through relevant education.
- To prepare each student to find his/her place in the context of human history and to comprehend the challenges we face in a changing world.
- To ensure mastery of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and artistry that meet or exceed content standards of Goals 2000.
- To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, collaborative skills and a sense of community responsibility.
- To use the natural environment as a classroom to foster appreciation for our ecosystem and the Earth as a whole.
- To engage the united efforts of parents, teachers, students and community members in the educational process and school governance.
- To participate in the nationwide effort to reform public education.

<table>
<tr><th>MEASURE</th><th>1995-96</th><th>1996-97</th><th>1997-98</th></tr>
<tr><td>California Achievement Test - 5
(mean percentiles)
Test was administered in October 1996 to develop a baseline for student performance</td><td>*</td><td><table>
<tr><th>Grades:</th><th>1-2</th><th>3-5</th><th>6-8</th></tr>
<tr><td>Vocabulary</td><td>47.0</td><td>33.4</td><td>60.4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Compre.</td><td>66.8</td><td>32.1</td><td>61.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Spelling</td><td></td><td>24.6</td><td>38.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lang. Mech.</td><td>49.1</td><td>66.4</td><td>51.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lang. Expr.</td><td>78.3</td><td>36.5</td><td>67.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Math-comp.</td><td>41.3</td><td>33.0</td><td>47.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>concepts</td><td>46.5</td><td>33.5</td><td>59.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Study Skills</td><td></td><td>38.7</td><td>57.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Science</td><td>73.6</td><td>38.6</td><td>65.4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Soc Stud.</td><td>59.1</td><td>29.0</td><td>58.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>58.7</td><td>36.6</td><td>56.6</td></tr>
</table></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Stanford Achievement Test
Crestone switched from the CAT to the Stanford to stay consistent with Moffat practice in other schools.</td><td></td><td><table>
<tr><th>Grades:</th><th>1-2</th><th>3-5</th><th>6-8</th></tr>
<tr><td>Reading</td><td>62</td><td>63</td><td>51</td></tr>
<tr><td>Math</td><td>48</td><td>51</td><td>62</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language</td><td>44</td><td>47</td><td>45</td></tr>
<tr><td>Science</td><td>78</td><td>39</td><td>57</td></tr>
<tr><td>Soc. Stud.</td><td></td><td>55</td><td>63</td></tr>
<tr><td>Complete Battery</td><td>55</td><td>62</td><td>53</td></tr>
</table>(national percentile rank)</td><td><table>
<tr><th></th><th>Reading</th><th>Math</th></tr>
<tr><td>4th</td><td>5.0</td><td>2.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>5th</td><td>5.6</td><td>6.2</td></tr>
<tr><td>6th</td><td>5.7</td><td>7.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>7th</td><td>na</td><td>7.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>8th</td><td>9.6</td><td>na</td></tr>
<tr><th></th><th>Language</th><th>Battery</th></tr>
<tr><td>4th</td><td>3.4</td><td>3.7</td></tr>
<tr><td>5th</td><td>6.2</td><td>5.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>6th</td><td>10.1</td><td>7.0</td></tr>
<tr><td>7th</td><td>10.6</td><td>8.4</td></tr>
<tr><td>8th</td><td>11.1</td><td>10.1</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Parent Involvement</td><td></td><td>1,520 hours
100% of parents volunteer</td><td>100% of parents volunteer at least 20 hours/semester</td></tr>
<tr><td>Attendance Rate</td><td>87.7%
91.4% PGL**</td><td>87.6%</td><td>88.7% PGL**</td></tr>
</table>

NOTE: CSAP scores are not reported for this school because fewer than 15 students took the test in each year.

*Initial assessments were done by non-standardized procedures and the information was used to design individual education programs and report to parents. The school did not report this data because it was not useful as an assessment of how students compare to other schools or national standards.

** Crestone serves a large group of families who previously home-schooled their children and who believe that travel is one of the best educational experiences. The PGL (Parent-Guided Learning) rate adjusts attendance to reflect travel. The school provides families who take their children out for travel with an educational trip package to complete while traveling.

BATTLE ROCK CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Montezuma Cortez School District

Location: Cortez (rural)
Enrollment: 26
Grade Levels: K-6
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 0

Student Teacher Ratio: 26.0
Percent Minority: 15.4%
Percent Free Lunch: 36.8%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 46.4%
Percent Special Education: 0%

MISSION: The mission of Battle Rock School is to enrich the students through both outdoor and indoor educational studies. Education at Battle Rock will promote the sharing of responsibilities, nurturing of family values, interacting with multi-age groups, and participation in innovative hands-on lessons to prepare the student to be a decent, self-motivated contributing citizen.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Battle Rock School offers personalized learning experiences for every child. Core academic skills are taught through thematic projects. Instruction features outdoor learning, the community as classroom, multi-age groupings and acceleration based on ability. The school works closely with parents to support instruction and reinforce values.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of six parents and one community member, sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will obtain at least a 75% mastery level in Reading, Language and Math.
- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level as measured by the standard testing instruments of the district.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95%.
- The school will attain a 100% graduation rate (measured by grade level promotion.)

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)-Form K complete battery % of students performing at or above grade level	Language - 71.42% Reading - 80.95% Math - 92.86%	Language - 61% / 64% Reading - 78% / 92% Math - 57% / 72% **(Fall 1996 / Spring 1997)**	Language - 62.5% / 82% Reading - 82% / 100% Math - 50% / 75% **(Fall 1997 / Spring 1998)**
District developed "Levels Test" % of students performing at or above grade level	*Lang/Reading Math* 3rd 83.3% 89.9% 5th 100 % 97.5% 6th 81.3% 66.7%	Data not available	All students scored at either proficient or advanced level in reading/language and math. No student had overall scores indicating "in progress."
Curriculum-Based Post Test Instruments (% of students who obtain 75% mastery of material	Language - 70.61% Reading - 95.24% Math - 84.17%	Language - 92% / 96% Reading - 87% / 96% Math - 86% / 84% **(Fall 1996 / Spring 1997)**	Language - 90% / 100% Reading - 80% / 100% Math - 90% / 92% **(Fall 1997 / Spring 1998)**
Graduation Rate Measured by grade level promotion		100%	100%
Attendance Rate	95%	93%	96.6%

NOTE: CSAP scores are not reported for this school because fewer than 16 students took the test in each year.

LAKE GEORGE - GUFFEY CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Park RE-2 School District

Location: Lake George (rural)
Enrollment: 193
Grade Levels: preK-8
Opening Date: Fall 1996
Waiting List: 0

Student/Teacher Ratio: 16.6
Percent Minority: 5.7%
Percent Free Lunch: 35.8%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 44.6%
Percent Special Education: 8.3%

MISSION: Strive for knowledge and truth in all we do, serving children's needs first.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Lake George - Guffey Charter School operates a small, rural charter school in two different sites and represents two different communities. The school is community-based and instruction is place-based. The curriculum emphasizes math and literacy. Instruction is interdisciplinary, experiential and project based.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board is comprised of three parents, two staff members, two community members and one non-voting student. The Governing Board makes policy decisions. The school administrator makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter application and school improvement plans)

- Meet or exceed an attendance rate of 95%.
- Achieve measurable growth for all students in academic performance that meets or exceeds the expectations of the parents, students and classroom teachers.
- Increase options for preK-8 students who are currently home-schooled or are travelling long distances to attend classes.
- Improve student skills in collaboration, working in teams, problem solving and conflict resolution.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - FOR RETURNING STUDENTS ONLY	**Grade Level Equivalent:** Guffey 4th 3.6 5th 4.4 6th 6.6 Lake George 4 4.1 5th 4.6 6th 5.9 7th 5.8 8th 7.4 **National Percentile Rank** (50% is the national average) Guffey - 58% Lake George - 53%	**Grade Level Equivalent:** Guffey 4th 4.5 5th 5.6 6th 6.3 Lake George 4 5.2 5th 5.6 6th 6.9 7th 6.9 8th 8.1 **National Percentile Rank** (50% is the national average) Guffey - 60% Lake George - 54%
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)	**Fourth grade reading:** 47% proficient or above (46% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 35% proficient or above (23% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 61% proficient or above (61% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 33% proficient or above (27% district average) **Third grade reading:** 71% proficient or above (65% district average)
Durrell Reading Analysis Grade Equivalent Levels	1st grade average: 2.5 2nd grade average: 3.6 3rd grade average: 4.7	1st grade average: 2.7 2nd grade average: 3.6 3rd grade average: 4.7
Attendance Rate	93%	93%

PUEBLO SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS AND SCIENCES
Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 60

Location: Pueblo (urban)
Enrollment: 422
Grade Levels: K-12
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 489

Student/Teacher Ratio: 17.6
Percent Minority: 54.3%
Percent Free Lunch: 32.5%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 41.9%
Percent Special Education: not reported

MISSION: Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences (PSAS) believes that "the best education for the best is the best education for us all." PSAS will promote enlightened educational goals while utilizing effective and innovative teaching techniques. Students will develop to their fullest potential and the community will share a commitment to learning as a lifelong process.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: PSAS features the same core curriculum for all students, an enriched educational setting in which all students will succeed. The arts are infused throughout the curriculum and are an integrated part of students' education within the structure of a sound academic program. Instruction is based on the Paideia model including didactic, tutoring and coaching and seminars.

GOVERNANCE: The Site Council (comprised of six parents, six students, six faculty members, a USC/District 60 Alliance representative, a Pueblo District 60 representative, a Sangre de Cristo Arts & Conference Center representative, business representatives from the Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce and the USC Provost) make policy decisions. The Dean of the School makes day-to-day operational decisions, in consultation with the faculty.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will meet or exceed all exit outcomes as determined by District 60 and the state of Colorado.
- Performance level discrepancies for Hispanic students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 in reading/writing and math will decrease (Goal is 5% for 1998).
- Percentage of students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 below proficient levels will decrease (Goal is 3% for 1998).
- The school will attain or exceed an attendance rate of at least 93%.
- 98% of PSAS families will volunteer at least 18 hours/year to the school.
- Parent satisfaction with PSAS' overall performance will be maintained at 80%.
- Percentage of students reading below grade level will decrease by 5%, using the Nelson Denny Reading Test.
- Using data from students' Personal Learning Records, the total of "at-risk" students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 will decrease by 5% in the content areas of reading/writing and math.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
ACT Passport Portfolio Project Wholistic Portfolio on 4-pt scale **Scores shown for PSAS/Other ACT Test Site Schools**	**Math Lang Science** **9th** 1.9/1.6 1.1/1.9 1.1/1.4 **10th** 1.8/1.7 1.1/1.9 1.2/1.6	**Math Lang. Science** **9th** 2.2/2.5 2.0/2.0 1.5/1.5 **10th** 2.4/2/5 2.1/2.3 1.9/1.7 **11th** 2.3/2.7 2.0/2.3 1.9/1.5	**Math Lang. Science** **Schoolwide Scores** 2.25 1.93 1.47
Nelson Denny Reading Test (% of students scoring at, above or below grade level)	Above grade level: 36 / 52 At grade level: 15 / 13 Below grade level: 49 / 35 Scores shown are for Fall 1995/ Spring 1996	Above grade level: 34 / 45 At grade level: 7 / 15 Below grade level: 59 / 40 Scores shown are for Fall 1996/ Spring 1997	**3rd grade Students:** Above: 30 / 50 At grade level: 10 / 15 Below: 60 / 35 Scores shown are for Fall 1996/ Spring 1997 **All students** were tested in Spring 1998 only: Above grade level: 51% At grade level: 13% Below grade level: 36%
ACT Plan - 10th grade Overall score on 32-point scale	not available	English: 16.4 / 16.5 Math: 16.6 / 16.5 Reading: 17.1 / 16.0 Science: 19.3 / 17.0 Composite: 17.4 / 16.6 **Scores shown are for PSAS/National mean**	English: 18.1 Math: 16.8 Reading: 17.7 Science: 18.4 Composite: 17.8 **Scores shown are for PSAS**
Terra Nova (Mean National Curve Equivalent - Total score includes reading, language, math, science and social studies) **Scores shown are for PSAS/Dist. 60**	Not administered	3rd grade: 46 / 44 4th grade: 40 / 47 5th grade: 52 / 50 6th grade: 52 / 47 7th grade: 46 / 45 8th grade: 50 / 46 9th grade: 49 / 49 10th grade: 53 / 53 **Average: 48.5 / 47.8**	3rd grade: 55 / 56 4th grade: 51 / 56 5th grade: 51 / 55 6th grade: 56 / 50 7th grade: 57 / 51 8th grade: 49 / 48 9th grade: 56 / 50 10th grade: 63 / 57 **Average: 54.7 / 52.7**
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)		**Fourth grade reading:** 26% proficient or above (44% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 3% proficient or above (19% district average)	**Fourth grade reading:** 66% proficient or above (53% district average) **Fourth grade writing** 37% proficient or above (30% district average) **Third grade reading:** 80% proficient or above (67% district average)
District Writing Assessment (Average score - 4-pt scale) **Scores shown are for PSAS/Dist. 60**	***Grades 4 5 8*** Content 2.0/2.6 3.0/3.0 2.9/2.8 Voice 2.1/2.7 3.3/3.2 3.1/3.0 Sentence Fluency 2.1/2.5 2.6/2.6 2.8/2.7 Mode 2.2/2.1 3.0/3.2 2.8/2.7	***Grades 4 7 10*** Content 2.4/2.7 2.5/2.8 2.4/3.0 Voice 2.8/2.9 2.7/2.8 3.2/3.3 Sentence Fluency 2.5/2.6 2.5/2.4 2.8/2.8 Mode 2.5/2.9 2.7/2.5 2.5/2.8	***Grades 5 7 10*** Content 2.8/3.1 3.3/3.1 3.8/3.3 Voice 2.8/2.9 3.1/3.2 4.0/3.6 Sentence Fluency 2.8/3.0 3.1/2.8 3.8/3.2 Mode 3.1/3.6 3.8/3.2 3.3/3.0
Parent Involvement	18,059 hours 100% of parents volunteered	16,890 hours 97% of parents volunteered	14,132 hours 97% of parents volunteered
Attendance Rate	93.3%	92.8%	93.04%

THE CONNECT SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 70

Location: Pueblo (Urban)
Enrollment: 132
Grade Levels: 6-8
Opening Date: Fall 1994
Waiting List: 300

Student/Teacher Ratio: 22.0
Percent Minority: 20.5%
Percent Free Lunch: 0%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 0%
Percent Special Education: not reported

MISSION: The purpose of this school is to offer the finest academic program possible that will provide for increased learning opportunities for all students in an environment devised to meet the unique needs of each student by providing opportunities consistent with the learning styles; to improve pupil learning by creating a school with high and rigorous standards for pupil performance; to encourage and allow the most effective and innovative teaching methods in an environment where each student is truly known; to provide teachers with the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for the management and control of the total school curriculum and environment; to produce a flexible set of learning outcomes measured with different and authentic forms of assessments; to provide students and parents with an educational opportunity to the highest quality; and to foster student, parent, and community involvement through the use of community resources and partnerships.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Connect emphasizes reduced class size, increased time spent on core subjects, connecting the community as classroom, and focusing resources on instruction. Connect uses a proven curriculum and adds a hands-on instructional approach and unique "city school" resources.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three parents, one student, one administrator and one community member, makes policy decisions in consultation with staff. The administrator and staff make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level in all content areas using district's standardized testing program.
- 85% of continuously enrolled students will achieve at 85% or above in mathematics, reading and language.
- 100% of students performing below grade level will show at least 9 months academic growth.
- 100% of students will receive a grade of C or better in exhibitions and in the Rite of Passage Exam on the first attempt.
- 100% of students will use technology to increase personal productivity, will be able to use various multimedia programs to assemble and present information, and will be able to use telecommunications to access information.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Stanford Achievement Test	(% of students who met district's standard of success [4-9 stanines]) Math - 87.26% Reading - 84.63% Language Arts - 84.11%	8th grade - national percentile rank Reading: 74 Math: 77 Language: 67 Science: 77 Soc. Stud: 70	Test not administered
Terra Nova National percentile rank		6th 7th 8th *District Avg.* Reading 69 68 76 *58* Lang. 67 67 74 *53* Math 79 70 78 *54* Science 79 69 71 *57* Soc Studies 72 65 68 *78* Total 73 69 78 *55*	6th 7th 8th Reading 78 77 76 Lang. 87 80 74 Math 88 80 81 Science 89 75 84 Soc Studies 78 72 80 Total 86 79 79 95% of students score at or above grade level. Scores are the highest for any school in Pueblo District 60 or 70.
Student Exhibitions % of students who achieved a "C" or better in exhibitions	98%	100%	100%
Exit Exams (Rite of Passage) % of students who achieved a grade of "C" or better on their first attempt	90%	100%	100%
Percentage of students performing below grade level who improved at least one grade level.	100%	100%	100%
Parent Attendance at School Functions	90%	95% (100% participation in fall conferences)	95% (100% participation in fall conferences)
Re-enrollment Rate	95%	95%	98%
Attendance Rate	97%	97%	97%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

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SWALLOWS CHARTER ACADEMY
Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 70

Location: Pueblo(rural)
Enrollment: 59
Grade Levels: 6-8
Opening Date: Fall 1996
Waiting List: 87

Student/Teacher Ratio: 14.8
Percent Minority: 10.2%
Percent Free Lunch: 0%
Percent Free/Reduced Lunch: 0%
Percent Special Education: 8.5%

MISSION: The mission of Swallows Academy is to help guide students in the development of their character and academic potential through academically rigorous, content-rich educational programs built around a spirit of community.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Swallows Charter Academy operates an academically challenging education program using the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence. The school emphasizes a "back to basics" philosophy, with high academic standards, small class size and a strict discipline code.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors, comprised of four parents and one community members, set policy for the school. The Director and Assistant Director make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter application and school improvement plans)

- Attendance: The Academy will achieve an attendance rate meeting or exceeding that of the average middle school within the District. Specifically, SCA will strive to achieve an average daily attendance of 95% or higher.
- Stable Enrollment: The Academy will strive for a voluntary re-enrollment rate of 95% of the eligible student population in years two through five of the Charter.
- Community Involvement: The Academy has set a goal of parental and community involvement equal to 10% or more of the total teaching hours budgeted each year.
- Class Size: Maximum enrollment allowed in any class will be 22 students.
- Grade Level Advance: 90% of students continuously enrolled in the school will have the necessary skills/competencies to advance to the next school level.
- Standardized Tests: 80% of our students will perform at or above grade level as measured by standardized testing.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) National percentile rank 50% is the national average Scores shown are for fall/spring of each academic year	**Grade 6 7 8** Reading 65/68 68/75 48/61 Math 57/70 57/72 45/57 Language 59/53 57/66 36/58 Science 63/73 62/60 47/58 Social Science 68/66 62/70 36/60	**Grade 6 7 8** Reading 54/62 71/74 68/60 Math 69/83 69/84 68/76 Language 55/71 59/68 65/62 Science 64/70 71/74 62/78 Social Science 61/64 65/76 68/70
Terra Nova National percentile rank Scores shown are for Swallows/District 70	Grade 8 Reading 58 / 58 Math 47 / 57 Language 58 / 56 Science 56 / 62 Social Science 55 / 58	Grade 8 Reading 62 / 62 Math 77 / 63 Language 56 / 59 Science 69 / 64 Social Science 71 / 61
Attendance Rate	92%	95%
Re-Enrollment Rate	71%	84%
Parent Attendance at Parent/Teacher Conferences	92%	100%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

ASPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Roaring Fork School District

Location:	Woody Creek (rural)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	16.3
Enrollment:	147	**Percent Minority:**	3.4%
Grade Levels:	K-8	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	70	**Percent Special Education:**	6.8%

MISSION: To help our students attain a strong academic foundation, interactive social skills and a commitment to personal and community responsibility. We strive to nurture, educate and graduate confident, creative and competent students. The school's focus is on integrated and experiential learning that combines teacher-led instruction with abundant opportunities for children to initiate and complete their own projects. Our students become and remain curious, independent and self-directed learners. They learn to take responsibility for their own education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school offers integrated and experiential learning that combines teacher-led instruction with project-based learning driven by student interest. Students establish individual learning goals each year and assess themselves through portfolios. The curriculum is project-based. The projects are mapped to the curriculum and aligned with standards and assessments. Students demonstrate skills and knowledge gained by creating a project which they present in learning centers. The school operates two campuses, one in Woody Creek and one in Carbondale. The Carbondale campus serves a K-3 population.

GOVERNANCE: The school is operated by the COMPASS. The COMPASS board is comprised of three parents, one teacher, one district official and two community members. The board, in conjunction with a school-based council (comprised of four parents, two staff members, two non-voting students and two administrators), sets policy for the school. The Administration makes day-to-day operating decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Attain an overall student attendance average of at least 90%.
- Teachers will incorporate state and district content standards in their curriculum, as evidenced by individual teacher portfolios, the school portfolio, and student portfolios of projects.
- Graduation rate of 100%. All graduates will leave school prepared for high school.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Student Portfolios Assessment focuses on artifacts that students can present to teachers, parents and others, demonstrating competency in reading, writing, speaking and listening		100% of students have portfolios	100% of students have portfolios Aspen Community School staff report "74% progress toward a thorough assessment of each student and their progress."
Graduation Rate	93%	100%	100%
Roaring Fork District Writing Assessment Using 6-Trait Writing Program Scores reflect a 5-point scale			**Grade 4 8** Ideas/Content 2.58 3.18 Originality 2.5 3.09 Voice 2.9 3.36 Sentence Fluency 2.6 3.55 Mechanics 2.0 3.36
Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)		results not reported because fewer than 16 fourth grade students took the test	**3rd Grade Reading:** 82% proficient or above (74% district average) Results are not reported for 4th grade reading and writing because fewer than 16 students took the test.
Attendance Rate	93%	91%	90%

ALPINE CHARTER SCHOOL
Sponsoring District: Summit School District

Location:	Dillon (rural/recreational)	**Student/Teacher Ratio:**	11.5
Enrollment:	46	**Percent Minority:**	4.9%
Grade Levels:	6-10	**Percent Free Lunch:**	0%
Opening Date:	Fall 1996	**Percent Free/Reduced Lunch:**	0%
Waiting List:	0	**Percent Special Education:**	6.5%

MISSION: The mission of the Alpine Charter School is to provide a safe, positive, tobacco, drug and alcohol free, mutually respectful environment where students, parents and teachers share a commitment to excellence, with innovative, individualized learning programs resulting in high academic achievement, a lifetime love of learning, and an ability to make a positive contribution to society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Alpine Charter School was designed to provide an alternative to the middle school program offered by the sponsoring district, featuring smaller class sizes, individualized learning plans and off-campus learning opportunities.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors is comprised of seven parents, four teachers, one administrator, one staff person and one student. The Board is responsible for determining the school policies. The Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school.

PERFORMANCE GOALS: (From Charter application and school improvement plans)

- Implement expanded educational programming as appropriate to each student's Individualized Education Plan.
- Improve student writing skills in the six trait writing method, as measured by pre and post-assessments. The first year of assessment will be 1998-99.

MEASURE	1996-97	1997-98
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)		The school administered this test to students but did not report the results in a way that could be used for this report.
Attendance Rate	93%	93.6%
Parent Involvement	45+ hours/per parent 90% of parents volunteer their time	45+ hours/per parent 90% of parents volunteer their time

NOTE: This school did not participate in the CSAP because it does not offer a 3rd or 4th grade program.

Conclusions

While comparative attempts to characterize the progress of the charter schools in the evaluation study are problematic, some kind of overall judgment about the record of these schools is valuable. In order to provide this overview, the evaluation team looked at all the student achievement and school performance data reported by the charter schools, in the context of the schools' own performance goals, the achievement levels in the sponsoring district, the population served by the schools and other variables that affect a school's performance. *It is important to note that the evaluation team did not conduct site visits or administer any independent assessments. Rather, this report and the conclusions about student performance rely solely on a paper review of CSAP scores and data reported by the charter schools' in their annual reports, school improvement plans and/or completed evaluation materials.*

On the basis of this limited review, the study offers these observations:

- *Eleven schools in the study (34%) provided data that indicate they are* ***exceeding*** *the expectations defined for their performance:*

    - Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley School District)
    - Mountain View Core Knowledge (Canon City School District)
    - Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
    - Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain School District)
    - Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County School District)
    - Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)
    - Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)
    - Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70).

- *Fifteen schools (47%) provided data that generally indicate they are* ***meeting expectations*** *defined for their performance:*

    - Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Roosevelt Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
    - Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
    - Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District)
    - Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
    - Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez School District)
    - Lake George - Guffey Charter School (Park School District)

  - Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
  - Swallows Academy (Pueblo School District 70)
  - Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District).

- *Five schools (16%) did not provide sufficient data to indicate whether they are meeting the expectations defined for their performance.* Based on the information provided by these schools, the evaluators cannot offer a judgment about their progress. This does not necessarily mean that the schools are not performing according to the terms of their charters; just that the schools have not produced data for this report that demonstrates such performance.

  - Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
  - GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)
  - Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
  - Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
  - Alpine Charter School (Summit School District).

- One school (3%) did not return completed evaluation materials:

  - EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R).

PART VIII - CHARTER SCHOOL FINANCES

Funding

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that the charter school and the sponsoring district "shall agree to funding and on any services to be provided by the school district to the charter school." The Act requires that the funding negotiated "cannot be less than eighty percent of the district per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) multiplied by the number of pupils enrolled in the charter school." PPOR is the funding for a district that represents the financial base of support for public education in that district, divided by the district's funded pupil count, minus the minimum amount of funds required to be transferred to the capital reserve fund, the insurance reserve fund or any other fund for the management of risk-related activities.

The charter schools in the 1998 evaluation study negotiated rates that ranged from 80% to in excess of 100%. Half of the schools received a funding rate of between 80% and 90%. Twelve schools (38%) received a funding rate of 100% or more.

All services provided by the school district, such as legal services, accounting services, maintenance, transportation and student assessment services are subject to negotiation between the charter school and the school district and are to be paid for out of the revenues negotiated or raised independently by the charter school. Charter schools also are entitled to the proportionate share of state and federal resources generated by students with disabilities and the staff serving them.

Table 17 shows the negotiated PPOR rate for the charter schools in the study and also lists the district services to which this rate entitles the charter school access at no cost. Identical funding rates in two different districts can provide the charter schools with access to significantly different ranges of district services. It is important, therefore, to look beyond the rate itself.

Several charter schools also purchased services (at cost or at a negotiated rate) from their sponsoring districts. These purchased services are not reflected on the Table.

The charter schools in this study relied on public funds for the great majority of their revenue. Most of the charter schools also generated funds from fundraising, fees, grants and other related activities. In most cases, these funds did not represent a significant portion of their total budgets.

Table 17 - Funding Rates and District-Provided Services

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**% PPOR**	**District Facility ?**	**District Provided Services as Part of Negotiated PPOR**
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	80%	no	Legal services, payroll/accounting services, surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	93%	no	Insurance, limited food services, maintenance, legal services, payroll/accounting services, limited special education services, limited professional development services, some student assessment services, some access to surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley)	85%	yes	Insurance, maintenance, legal services, professional development services, surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office, some personnel functions (access to substitutes)
Mountain View Charter (Canon City)	100%	no	Student assessment for IEP students only, surplus furniture/equip.
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	92.4%	no	none
Cheyenne Mountain Academy (Cheyenne Mountain Dist. 12)	100%	no	none
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	100%	no	none
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	101% [21]	no	Special education services, student assessment services, access to district purchasing office
Roosevelt (Colorado Springs District 11)	100%	yes	none
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	80% for DPS students 90% for founding families', non-DPS students	no	Some special education services, ITBS assessment services, surplus furniture/equip., some lunch services
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	100%	no	none
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	100%	no	none
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	100%	no	none
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	80%	yes	Insurance, food services, maintenance, legal services, payroll/accounting services, special education services, some professional development, transportation, access to district purchasing office, facility, technical support from BOCES
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	not reported	not reported	not reported
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	90%	no	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, special education services, professional development services, surplus furniture/equip.

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[21] Colorado Springs District 11 pays 101% of PPOR to GLOBE and the school returns 8.3% of this total to the district for special education services.

Table 17 - Funding Rates and District-Provided Services (Continued)

Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	approx 120%[22]	no	Access to district purchasing office
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	85%	no	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, professional development services, student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	85%	no	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, some professional development services, some student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office, maintenance
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	85%	no	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, computer access to district mainframe, student assessment services, surplus furniture/classroom equipment, access to district purchasing office
Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County)	80%	yes	Insurance, food service, maintenance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office
Jefferson Academy Junior High (Jefferson County)	80%	yes	Insurance, food service, maintenance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office
Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)	100%	no	Professional development services, surplus furniture/equipment, access to district purch. office
Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)	100%	no	Payroll services, accounting/budget service, special education services, access to district purchasing office
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	85%	no	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, special education, access to district purchas. office
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	80%	yes	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, transportation, access to district purchasing office
Lake George - Guffey Charter (Park School District)	85%	yes	Transportation, some access to surplus furniture/equipment, property and liability insurance
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	92%	yes	Insurance, food services, student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office, facility
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	80%	no	Insurance, payroll/accounting services, special education services, transportation, student assessment services, access to district warehouse
Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70)	80%	yes	Insurance, maintenance, payroll/accounting services, special education services, transportation, student assessment services, access to district purchasing office
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	85%	no	Insurance, payroll services, special education services, surplus furniture/equip.
Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)	100%	no	none

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

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[22] Funding for Marble Charter School is calculated by a formula other than a negotiated percentage of PPOR. The formula translates roughly to 120% of the sponsoring district's PPOR.

Funding of Special Education Services

Funding of special education services has become an especially problematic issue between some charter schools and their sponsoring districts. The relationship between the charter schools and their sponsoring districts are structured along several different models:

- The insurance model where the district withholds a certain amount, often on a per student basis, and then provides whatever special education services the school needs. The potential strength of this approach is that the school has no financial incentive not to identify students who should receive special education services.
- The fee-for-service model where the charter school purchases specific services from the district on an as-needed basis.
- The charter school assumes full responsibility for meeting the needs of its special education students, including hiring its own teachers or contracting with some individual or group from outside the school to provide the needed services.
- Various combinations of the above.

The Colorado Department of Education has established some guidelines that may help charter schools and their sponsoring districts work out mutually satisfactory agreements in this area.

Facility Costs

Funding issues are made more problematic for many charter schools because of their obligation to pay rent for use of a facility to house their educational program. **The majority of charter schools in this evaluation study (22 of 31 reporting schools, or 71%) rented their facilities or used facilities donated by other organizations because they could not secure appropriate district facilities for use.** Moreover, The Colorado Charter Schools Act did not appropriate state funds to help charter schools cover their start-up costs.

Nine of the 31 schools that reported data (29%) used district facilities for which no rent was paid. Another three schools (9.7%) used non-district facilities, but did not have to pay rent. The other 19 schools (61.3%) paid rent out of their operating revenues. For these schools, Table 13 shows the rent payment as a percentage of the school's total revenues. This percentage ranges from a low of 3% of total revenues (Stargate Charter School, Adams Five Star) to a high of 18% (GLOBE Charter School, Colorado Springs District 11 and Lewis Palmer Charter Academy School, Lewis Palmer School District). **On average, rent represented 10.3% of the total operating revenue for these 19 schools in the 1997-98 school year.**

Improvement costs ranged widely, from $0 to $2.7 million for the purchase of a new facility.

During the 1997-98 school year approximately $950,000 was available to Colorado charter schools for this purpose through a grant application process. These federal funds did not address all the start-up needs identified by the schools.

Table 18 describes the type of facilities secured by the charter schools as well as rental and renovation costs incurred by them.

Table 18 - Facility Costs Incurred by Colorado Charter Schools

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**Who Owns Facility**	**Rent 1997-98 % Total Revenue**	**Square Ft/Student**	**Improvement Costs 1996-97 1997-98**
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	Public	$336,516 12.6%	192.7	$62,737 $109,312
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	City	$3,700 3%	70	$250 $0
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley)	Sponsoring District	0	80	$4,000 $1,000
Mountain View Charter (Canon City)	Private	$45,912 7.7%	30	$0 $0
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	Private	$0	72.5	$0 $0
Cheyenne Mountain Academy (Cheyenne Mountain Dist. 12)	Private	$97,500 6.5%	81.5	$70,000 $25,000
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	City	$80,800 12.3%	93	$0 $0
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	Private	$98,052 18%	78	$0 $19,500
Roosevelt (Colorado Springs District 11)	Sponsoring District	$0	79	not reported
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	Private	$37,500 3.9%	91	$22,000 $150,000 (over 3 yrs)
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	Private	$150,233 9.8%	70	$30,000 $26,000
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	Private	$153,800 13.0%	60	$20,749 $11,444
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	Private	$131,000 12.7%[23]	75	$50,000 Built new $2.7 million building
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	Sponsoring District	$0	97.5	$570 $3,200
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	not reported	not reported	not reported	not reported
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	Private	$110,380 12%	63	$120,000 $0
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	Non-Profit	$0	100	$0 $0
Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	Private	$60,000 9%	97	$12,000 $16,000
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	Private	$180,000 14%	113	$0 $5,907
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	Private	$44,987 9%	80	$4,376 $116,000
Jefferson Academy Elem. (Jefferson County)	Sponsoring District	$0	87	$3,060 $10,000
Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County)	Sponsoring District	$0	84	not reported $6,000

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[23] Renaissance Charter School also made a $28,000 down payment on a new facility from its 1997-98 budget. The new facility opened in September 1998.

Table 18 - Facility Costs Incurred by Colorado Charter Schools (Cont.)

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	**Who Owns Facility**	**Rent 1997-98 % Total Revenue**	**Square Ft/Student**	**Improvement Costs 1996-97 1997-98**
Lewis Palmer Charter Acad.[24] (Lewis Palmer School District)	Private	$197,984 18%	86	not reported $14,278
Littleton Academy (Littleton School District)	Private	$161,892 10%	30	not reported $30,000
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	Private	$28,828 10%	40	not reported $10,000
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	Sponsoring District	$0	40	$2,500 $7,000
Lake George - Guffey Charter (Park School District)	Sponsoring District	$0	not reported	$0 $20,000
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	Sponsoring District	$0	117	$8,760 $0
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	Private	$46,800 8%	80	included in rent included in rent
Swallows Academy (Pueblo 70)	Sponsoring District	$0	43	$2,000 $12,000
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	Non-Profit	$0	70	$0 $0
Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)	Public	$34,800 7%	49	$20,000 $500

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

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[24] Lewis Palmer Charter Academy has a lease-to-purchase agreement. Lewis Palmer School District 38 will own the building when LPCA pays off the loan.

PART IX- IMPACT OF WAIVERS

Overview of the Waiver Process and Its Use by Charter Schools

This section of the report looks at the pattern of waiver requests made by charter schools and the impact of these waivers on the schools' educational program. It further explores whether, in the experience of schools in the study, the existing waiver mechanism is adequate to support the intent and purpose of the Colorado Charter Schools Act.

The Colorado charter school law does not provide an automatic exemption – often referred to as a "superwaiver" -- from most state laws or regulations. Instead, the law extends to charter schools the operation of the same waiver provision that has been available to every public school district in Colorado since 1989.

This provision, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-2-117, allows the state board of education to waive education laws (Title 22), and the rules and regulations promulgated under those laws, subject to standards providing for educational achievement and enhancement of educational opportunity. The waiver application must be made by the board of education of the requesting school district and reflect the concurrence of: (1) a majority of the appropriate accountability committee, (2) a majority of the affected certificated administrators, and (3) a majority of the teachers in the affected school or district. These process applies whether an individual school or a school district is seeking the waiver.

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires that the contract between a charter school and a local board of education include all requests for waivers. These requests are jointly made by the local board of education and the governing body of the charter school to the state board (Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-105). Waivers made in connection with charter school applications are issued for a period equal to the term of the charter, subject to review every two years. Charter schools may seek renewal of the waiver for subsequent terms of their charter under the same terms and conditions described above.

The charter application process normally precedes the opening of the school. Therefore, at the time a charter school applies for waivers, the school has no teachers, administrators or accountability committee members to make the concurrences required in the waiver statute. The state board has granted waivers to charter schools under these conditions, however, concluding that the intent of the statute was met. Charter schools are schools of choice for teachers and administrators as well as students. Educators who choose to work at a particular charter school therefore have notice of the waivers in effect at the school at the time they accept employment.

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All 32 charter schools included in the study sought at least one waiver. Thirty-one of the schools (97%) pursued multiple waivers. There is a definite pattern of waiver requests among the charter schools, despite the wide range of philosophies represented by these schools.

- **94%** of the schools sought a waiver of the **Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act**
- **94%** of the schools sought a waiver of the **Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act.**
- **85%** of the schools sought a wavier of the Act related to **Local Board Duties.**
- **78%** of the schools sought a waiver of the statute related to the **Employment and Authority of Principals.**
- **69%** of the schools sought a waiver of the Act related to **Local Board Powers.**

By an overwhelming margin, the charter schools in the study stated that the waivers related to site control of curriculum and employment/personnel issues were of the highest priority in providing them with the autonomy to implement their educational programs.

Table 19 provides an overview of the frequency and distribution of the waivers requested by the charter schools in this study.

The stated purpose of the waiver statute is to advance educational achievement and accountability. Prior to the advent of charter schools in Colorado, districts invoked the waiver statute sparingly and primarily for minor issues. In the four years prior to the passage of The Charter Schools Act, the period from 1989 to 1993, the state board granted twenty waivers. Between 1994 and 1997, in contrast, charter schools sought and received a total of 96 waivers. During that same period (1994 to1997), the number of waiver requests granted to public school districts remained a modest 18.

There are several explanations for the expansive use of the waiver law by charter schools. The first explanation is a practical one: as schools of choice, it is easier for charter schools to obtain the concurrences required by the waiver statute.

Another explanation is that the budget constraints facing charter schools force them to do business in a different way. The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides no start-up funds for new charter schools and requires that charter schools receive a minimum of 80% of per pupil operating revenue. Some charter schools have successfully negotiated a higher rate of funding, others have not. Moreover, most schools must pay some portion of their operating revenues to rent facilities because they do not have access to school district facilities or to capital construction funds. Finally, many of the charter schools seek to maintain lower pupil/teacher ratios than conventional public schools. This practice has major fiscal implications. Given these budget parameters, the ability to structure employee compensation outside the district's normal salary schedule is essential to the viability of many charter schools.

A third explanation is philosophical. In order to implement a distinctive educational program, the great majority of charter schools have attempted to establish considerable autonomy from their sponsoring district in matters related to personnel, governance and educational approach (e.g. testing, curriculum, instruction, discipline code, professional development activities). In their waiver petitions, many charter school applicants stated their belief that existing school structures and approaches are not serving students well They cited system issues that they perceive exist in conventional public schools -- including the alienation of parents, non-responsiveness to consumer needs, highly managed parent and community involvement in decision-making, frustration with collective bargaining and the inflexible Master Agreements produced through this process, and lack of flexibility regarding salary schedules and teacher evaluations -- that they intend to avoid or overcome.

Methodology

The evaluators reviewed the written waiver requests filed by the charter schools and the minutes of state board meetings during which the requests were considered. For each charter school in this study, the evaluators identified each waiver requested, the rationale given by the charter school for the request, and the alternative approach the school offered. Through a customized waiver questionnaire sent to each charter school, the evaluators asked the schools to confirm the accuracy of this information.

In addition, the questionnaire asked the school to state whether each waiver was effective in providing the flexibility to implement its distinctive educational programs, and to describe the impact of the waiver on the school's program.

In an effort to explore more fully the policy implications of the charter schools' waiver practices, the questionnaire sought information with respect to three additional issues. First, the schools were asked to identify the two to three waivers that had been the most essential to designing and operating their educational programs. This question sought to determine the relative priority and importance of the waivers pursued by the charter schools. Secondly, the questionnaire asks the school to identify instances, if any, where the sponsoring district precluded or discouraged it from seeking waivers from the state board. Third, the questionnaire asks the school whether changes in the sponsoring district's leadership or philosophy have resulted in changes in the district's interpretation of the scope or the waivers granted to the school.

31 of the 32 schools in the study (97%) completed the waiver questionnaire. It is important to note that because of turnover in the position of school director/principal/manager, the person completing the questionnaire was not, in every case, involved in the development of the charter application or the preparation of the waiver petition to the state board.

Table 19: Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1993 and Fall 1994

STATUTE WAIVED	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Academy	Core Knowledge	Comm Learn.	Excel	Eagle	Comm Involv.	Jeffer-son	Coll-egiate Acad.	Battle Rock	Pueblo School Arts/ Sci	Con-nect
22-1-115 - School Age Census													
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22-30.5-104 - Colorado Charter Schools Act													
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-126 - Employment and Authority of Principals	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance	X					X							
22-63-101 -Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Table 19 (Cont.): Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools Schools Opened in Fall 1995

STATUTE WAIVED	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P.S. 1	Community Prep.	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy	Crestone	Aspen Community
22-1-115 - School Age Census									X	
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
22-30.5-104 - Colorado Charter Schools Act						X				
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties		X	X	X	X	X	X			
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers		X	X	X	X		X			
22-32-126 - Employment and Authority of Principals	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance			X		X					
22-63-101 -Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 19 (Cont.): Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1996

STATUTE WAIVED	Summit Middle School	Roosevelt Edison	Mountain View Charter Academy	Jefferson Academy Jr. High	Lewis Palmer Charter Academy	Littleton Academy	Lake George-Guffey Charter	Swallows Academy	Alpine Charter School
22-1-115 - School Age Census									
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X	X	X	[25]	X	X	X
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-119 - Kindergartens		X	X						
22-32-126-Employment /Authority of Principals		X	X	X			X	X	X
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance		X	X						
22-63-101 -Teacher Employment, Comp & Dismissal Act	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

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[25] Littleton Academy sought and obtained the authority to select and employ its own professional staff and to determine their salaries through waivers of relevant district policies. But the school did not seek a waiver of state law in this regard.

A. Certificated Performance Evaluation Act

Description of Statute Waived: This Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-9-106, establishes the duties and requirements of school districts regarding the evaluation of certificated personnel, the district's reporting requirements to the State Board and the minimum information required in the district's written evaluation system.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Thirty of the 32 charter schools (94%) in the study sought and received a waiver from the operation of this statute.[26]

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The prevailing reason for this waiver request was the schools' desire to have the flexibility to create an evaluation process that is consistent with the mission and vision of the charter school. The second reason was the ability to hire staff who were not certificated in Colorado, but who meet quality criteria described by the charter school.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Schools were able to hire non-certificated staff and evaluate teachers based on school goals and policies.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: All of the schools in the study have an evaluation policy in place that is more compatible with the school philosophy. Table 15 describes the alternative evaluation policies the charter schools are using.

Table 20 - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school's assistant manager provides classroom evaluations and recommendations. The Governing Board is actively involved in teacher evaluations. The evaluation determines pay bonuses.
Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star)	Evaluation of staff is based on a two-tiered process: A professional development track and a remediation track. The professional development track involves peer evaluation with the use of the Colorado Assessment for Competencies in Teaching Instrument (used in the CSU Teacher Induction Program). In the event of unsatisfactory performance, the teacher is placed in the remediation track and the processes described in the Master Agreement are followed.
Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley School District)	Authorized personnel (principal, peers and representatives of the Board of Directors) undertake formal evaluations of staff regularly. The evaluation plan includes professional growth activities, interactions with students and parents, professional conduct and performance, student achievement and ability to deal with the learning styles/needs of individual students.
Mountain View Charter Acad. (Canon City School District)	The administrator conducts performance reviews, including observations, review of lesson plans and feedback from parent surveys. The administrator maintains responsibility for timely and consistent implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence and additional curriculum described in Charter.

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[26] Littleton Academy sought and obtained the authority to select and employ its own professional staff and to determine their salaries through waivers of relevant district policies. But the school did not seek a waiver of state law in this regard.

Table 20 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	Director has administrative experience, but need not hold a Type D certificate. Teachers are evaluated by the Parent Senate and Director.
Cheyenne Mountain Charter (Colorado Springs District 12)	The school's governing board appointed a standing Teacher Review Committee (TRC) of staff and parents. The TRC conducts a formal observation of teachers each semester, based on a set of established guidelines, and cooperates with the principal to complete the evaluation.
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	Academic advisors meet monthly with the Administrator, the Assistant Administrator, the Dean of Students and the Chairman of the Building Advisory Accountability Committee. Staff select their own professional development activities.
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school created its own personnel performance board of parents, students, community members and teachers. This board conducts teacher evaluations.
Roosevelt-Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school's performance appraisal process includes: observation of teachers by principal, academy director, lead teacher and/or peers; professional growth plan; professional portfolio and self-appraisal based on Edison's school program standards and guidelines. The principal provides a summative assessment.
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	The school uses an employee evaluation system that is congruent with the school's "continuous improvement" philosophy. The school emphasizes new professional opportunities for teachers.
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	Teachers are evaluated by a Teacher Review Committee of the Governing Board. The evaluators are trained by the school district and have in-depth knowledge of the Core Knowledge curriculum and assessments.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	The Operating Council established an evaluation process with technical assistance from the sponsoring district. Director oversees process.
Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County)	The school uses both a self-evaluation process and team review in its evaluation system, according to its own review schedule and criteria.
Community of Learners (Durango District 9-R)	The evaluation process provides for direct feedback from students, parents and peers, while addressing professional development through goal setting and self-evaluation.
EXCEL School (Durango District 9-R)	The evaluation system consists of two parts. Part One uses traditional tools of formal observations and summative evaluations. Part Two uses the same model of instruction/assessment that is applied to students in the school, and includes measurement against pre-stated goals, portfolios, self-assessment, observations by peers, and input from students and parents. Compensation reflects teacher performance.
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	Teachers and administrators are evaluated with the same instrument used for all other district teachers and administrators, but the evaluator does not necessarily hold a Type D certificate. The dean is evaluated by the school's governing board, and not by the school district.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	A Teacher Review Committee (TRC) is responsible for reviewing the performance of all classroom teachers according to established criteria. The TRC solicits input from parent volunteers in the classroom.

Table 20 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Collegiate Academy (Jefferson County)	The school expanded the district's process to include peer evaluation and input from students, parents and the school director. The school's director is evaluated by teachers, parents, students and a district-level supervisor.
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	The school uses its own evaluation procedure including student, parent, peer and self-appraisals. The sponsoring district provided training in evaluation.
Community Involved Charter (Jefferson County)	The school uses a peer evaluation process that requires all staff members to develop and be held accountable for personal improvement plans. If teachers do not make satisfactory progress, they are placed on probationary improvement plans. Parents and students participate in evaluations. The school's manager facilitates, rather than conducts, the evaluation process.
Jefferson Academy Elementary (Jefferson County)	The school's evaluation system is based on the sponsoring district's Certificated Personnel Performance Review Resource Manual. This system is supplemented by a school-based process that provides regular feedback with regard to teacher performance.
Jefferson Academy Jr. High (Jefferson County)	The school's evaluation system is based on the sponsoring district's Certificated Personnel Performance Review Resource Manual. This system is supplemented by a school-based process that provides regular feedback with regard to teacher performance.
Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (Lewis Palmer School District)	Teachers develop annual growth plans in conjunction with their supervisors and maintain portfolios to collect evidence of growth. Plans are submitted to the school's board of directors.
Lake George - Guffey Charter (Park School District)	The school uses Teacher Portfolios as the basis of evaluation and to promote professional growth.
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma-Cortez School)	Since the 1995-96 school year, an outside consultant has conducted the evaluations.
Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (Pueblo District 60)	The school's staff is employed by the University of Southern Colorado and is evaluated using the University's performance standards and assessment procedures. The school's governing council approved the evaluation system.
Connect Charter School (Pueblo District 70)	The school is using the "Turning Points Recommendations for Teacher Evaluation" in order to ensure that its evaluation system is consistent with the school's instructional model. Instructors are involved in data collection, analysis and goal setting. Evaluation is used explicitly as a tool for instructional and school improvement.
Swallows Academy (Pueblo District 70)	The Performance Appraisal system reviews the overall performance of the staff through multiple methods, including academic progress of students, parent satisfaction, classroom observations by director and accountability committee members, and progress the teachers have made in meeting personal goals.
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	The school's director oversees a peer evaluation process that incorporates the use of portfolios. Evaluation input also is received from students, parents, the governing board and self-appraisals.
Alpine Charter School (Summit School District)	The evaluation system is consistent with the school's educational program and includes input from students, parents and peers.

B. Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act

Description of Statute Waived: This law, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-63-101 et seq, contains numerous provisions that define the nature of the employment relationship between teachers and their employers. The law:

- requires all teachers to hold a teacher's certificate;
- requires all employment contracts to be in writing and to contain specific damage provisions;
- contains requirements regarding the transfer of teachers;
- sets specific requirements for probationary teachers and the renewal and nonrenewal of their contracts;
- sets forth the grounds and a detailed administrative procedure for the dismissal of non-probationary teachers;
- requires districts to adopt a salary schedule, salary policy or a combined salary schedule and policy; and
- requires those districts that adopt a salary schedule to place teachers on the salary schedule at a level at least commensurate with (but not limited to) the teacher's education, prior experience and experience in the district.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Thirty of the 32 schools in the study (94%) sought and were granted a waiver of some or all provisions of this Act.[27]

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The schools requested this waiver in order to build a school community that reflects their educational mission and vision. This waiver also provides the schools with more latitude in budgeting personnel costs. The most commonly cited reasons for requesting the wavier were:

- the ability to hire non-certificated staff[28]
- flexibility in staffing patterns
- establishing at-will employment relationships with staff.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Schools were able to hire qualified staff and to make any necessary accommodations to the curriculum.

In many districts, a master agreement negotiated between the district and the teachers sets out terms and conditions of employment that incorporate -- and often add detail to -- the requirements contained in the Act. In order for charter schools in these districts to achieve autonomy with respect to personnel matters, the schools must secure both a waiver of state law and the right to operate outside the scope of the master agreement. The charter school's relationship to the master agreement typically is spelled out in the charter school contract.

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[27] Littleton Academy sought and obtained the authority to select and employ its own professional staff and to determine their salaries through waivers of relevant district policies. But the school did not seek a waiver of state law in this regard.

[28] Three schools also sought and received a waiver of the Teacher Certification Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-60-101, in addition to a waiver of the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act in order to secure the flexibility to employ non-certificated personnel in its educational program.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: Twenty-six of the 30 schools (87%) that sought a waiver of this Act have established an at-will employment relationship with their employees. Their governing boards, rather than the sponsoring district's salary schedule and policies, sets salaries, benefits and terms of employment. Some of the charter schools (for example, Cheyenne Mountain Charter School, Roosevelt-Edison Charter School, Swallows Academy and Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences) tie compensation to performance. The following table provides a more detailed description of the alternative employment practices and policies in place in the charter schools.

Table 21 - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star) **Cherry Creek Academy** (Cherry Creek) **Community of Learners** (Durango 9-R)	All employees are at-will. The terms and conditions of employment are outlined in the employment contract. The governing board sets compensation for all staff.
Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star)	Employees cannot be dismissed, except through the process set out in the Adams 12 Master Agreement. Staff develops a salary schedule that may be different than the sponsoring district's.
Mountain View Core Know. (Canon City School District)	The school set its own salary schedule and conditions of employment. Continued employment is subject to annual satisfactory performance review Teachers need not be certificated, but must complete certification during term of employment.
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school uses the City of Colorado Springs employee classifications. Employees are not subject to the sponsoring district's salary schedule or Master Agreement. The school employs experienced teachers, who are not required to be certificated, as independent contractors.
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	All employees are at-will, employed on a year-to-year basis. The school adopts its own salary schedule. All instructors must hold at least a four-year degree in a discipline area.
Roosevelt Edison (Colorado Springs District 11)	Employment is subject to satisfactory performance evaluations on an annual basis. Salary and terms of employment are negotiated between the school and teachers. The school uses a merit pay system.
Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain Dist. 12) **Swallows Academy** (Pueblo District 70)	All employees are at-will. The school is responsible for their selection, compensation, promotion, discipline and dismissal. The school sets its own salary schedule which includes merit pay. Teachers need not be certificated, but must meet qualifications set out in the charter contract.

Table 21 - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies (Continued)

Summit Middle School (Boulder Valley) **Academy Charter School** (Douglas County) **Renaissance Charter School** (Douglas County) **P.S. 1** (Denver Public Schools) **Excel Academy** (Jefferson County) **Lewis Palmer Charter Acdy.** (Lewis Palmer School District) **Lake George - Guffey Charter** (Park School District)	All employees are at-will. The school sets its own salary and conditions of employment. Teachers are not required to have a certificate. Summit Middle School is an approved site for alternative certification.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County) **Eagle County Charter School** (Eagle County) **Collegiate Academy** (Jefferson County) **Jefferson Academy Elementary** (Jefferson County) **Jefferson Academy Jr. High** (Jefferson County) **The Excel School** (Durango 9-R)	All employees are at-will, regardless of their length of service. Teachers are employed under the terms and conditions of a written employment contract. The school district does not make transfers to or within the charter school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school. The school fixes the compensation of all employees. Teachers are not required to hold a valid certificate upon being employed, but must obtain a certificate by the end of their fourth year of employment.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed District) **Crestone Charter School** (Moffat Consolidated) **Aspen Community School** (Roaring Fork School District) **Alpine Charter School** (Summit School District)	All employees are at-will. The school sets salary and conditions of employment. Teachers are not required to hold a valid certificate upon being employed, but must obtain a certificate by the end of their third year of employment.

Table 21 - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies (Continued)

Community Involved Charter (Jefferson County)	All employees are at-will, employed on a year-to-year basis. The school sets compensation based on criteria listed in the employment contract. The district does not assign teachers or administrators to the school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school.
Battle Rock Charter (Montezuma-Cortez District)	All employees are at-will, on year-to-year contracts. The school sets compensation. Terms of employment are defined in the contract. The school may hire qualified individuals who do not hold a Colorado certificate, but such persons agree to obtain a certificate before their third year of employment with the school.
Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)	The school does not use the district salary schedule. Teacher compensation is determined by the governing board and is based, in part, on performance. The school may hire qualified staff, for example, university faculty or people with expertise in foreign languages or the arts, who do not hold a Colorado teacher certificate. Other provisions of the Act remain effective, but references in the statute to "school district" were replaced by references to "the University of Southern Colorado."

C. Specific Duties of the Board of Education

Description of the Statute Waived: In Section 22-32-109, Colo. Rev. Stat., the law enumerates specific duties of elected boards of education.

How Many Schools Sought This Waiver? Twenty-seven of the 32 schools (84%) in the study sought waivers of this section.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request this Waiver?: Charter schools sought waivers of specific subsections of this Act to clarify that certain of the enumerated duties of the board of education (for example, prescribing textbooks and curriculum, selecting hiring staff and fixing their pay, adopting a school calendar, adopting conduct and discipline codes) would be under the authority of the charter school's governing body.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All responding schools confirmed that the waiver was effective in achieving its intended purpose.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? In all cases, the charter schools sought to have specific duties of the local board of education vested in their governing boards.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made?: The charter schools characterize the impact of this waiver as:

- Giving their governing boards the autonomy to promote educational innovation and to maintain a consistent educational philosophy;
- Providing parents and students, through the governing board, with a much greater role in decision making;
- Promoting administrative efficiency.

D. Employment and Authority of Principals

Description of Statute Waived: Section 22-32-126, Colo. Rev. Stat., provides for the employment of principals, describes their role and requires that principals hold a Type D administrative certificate.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver? Twenty-five of 32 schools (78%) in the study sought a waiver of this law.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The schools wanted the flexibility to hire qualified administrators who do not hold Type D certificates and/or to use an administrative team instead of a traditional principal model. The schools also wanted the flexibility to structure professional development and school policies to meet their individual needs.

Was the Waiver Effective? All of the charter schools who received a waiver from the operation of this act confirmed that the waiver has been effective in achieving its intended purpose.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: In most cases, schools do not require a Type D certificate for their director, although they set other qualifications, including educational requirements, business and/or educational experience. The exceptions to this general trend are spelled out in the following table.

Table 22 - Charter School Alternatives to Traditional Principal Model

Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school divides the duties of principal among a Business Manager, Lead Teacher and Community Resource Coordinator.
Community Prep Charter (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school is managed by the Industrial Training Division of the City of Colorado Springs.
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school employs an assistant administrator. The governing board executes the duties traditionally assigned to a principal.
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	The school employs a coordinator, similar to a lead teacher, rather than a principal. The coordinator is not required to hold a Type D certificate and works on a leadership team with the Parent/Community Coordinator and the Admin. Steering Committee.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	The board of directors, working through committees, is responsible for administration of the school in cooperation with the sponsoring school district.
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma-Cortez)	The school does not employ a principal. The teachers work directly with the school's governing board. The head teacher holds the title of School Director.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made?: Schools have the flexibility to:

- Design a leadership/management team and structure that is consistent with its philosophy of education and governance;
- Draw from a wider pool of qualified individuals -- this is especially important; given the severe budgetary constraints under which charter schools operate and
- Create a more collegial management style.

E. Specific Powers of the Board of Education

Description of the Statue Waived: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-32-110 lists the specific powers of local boards of education, including the power to terminate employment and adopt policies related to in-service training.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Twenty-two of the 32 schools (69%) in the study sought waivers of specific subsections in this statute.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: In all cases, the powers described in the statute are exercised by the governing board of the charter school instead of the local board of education.

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Was the Waiver Effective?: The charter school governing boards exercised the authority they sought.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: In all cases, the powers enumerated in the statute are exercised by the Charter Schools' governing boards instead of the local boards of education.

F. Compulsory School Attendance Law

Description of the Statute Waived: The Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-33-104(4) requires local boards to adopt policies setting forth the district's attendance requirements. The policy must provide for excused absences.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Six of the 32 schools (19%) sought a waiver of the compulsory school attendance law.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: Most requesting schools wanted to implement distinctive calendars/schedules that were inconsistent with the provisions of the Act. A few schools wanted to adopt an attendance policy that was more consistent with the school's educational approach and/or administrative procedures.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All schools stated that the waiver adequately removed the barrier to which it was addressed.

G. Kindergarten

Description of the Statute Waived: The Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 32-32-119, states that a board of education may establish and maintain kindergartens for the instruction of children one year prior to their admission to the first grade.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Roosevelt Edison Charter School (Colorado Springs 11) and Mountain View Core Knowledge Charter School (Canon City School District) sought and attained a waiver of this statute.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: Both schools wanted to operate full-day kindergarten as an integral part of their educational programs and are located in school districts that offer half-day kindergarten.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Yes, both schools offer full-day kindergarten programs.

H. School Census - School Age

Description of the Statute Waived: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-1-115 provides that school age is any age over six and under twenty-one years.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Crestone Charter School requested this waiver.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: Crestone Charter School wanted to enroll children who were not age six on June 1, on the basis of an assessment of readiness skills in the areas of social, physical and academic development.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Four children attended the charter school who otherwise would not have been able.

I. Colorado Charter Schools Act

Description of the Statute Waived: The Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-104, states that a charter school is part of the district in which it is located.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy sought this waiver.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The school's founders could not identify a feasible location within the boundaries of the sponsoring district.

Was the Waiver Effective?: The school was able to secure a suitable location in a neighboring school district that is appropriate for its purpose and convenient for the students.

Effectiveness of the Process by Which Colorado Charter Schools Secure Waivers

The questionnaire responses indicated that in all cases the waivers removed those barriers which the schools intended them to address.

Two charter schools, both in Adams 12 Five Star District, reported that they were prevented by their sponsoring district from pursuing certain waivers of state law with respect to their original charter application. Stargate reported that the district would not allow the school to request the right to hire non-certificated teachers (even on a provisional basis) and would not allow the school to enroll out-of-district students. The Academy of Charter Schools also reported that the district would not allow the school to seek a waiver of state certification requirements. Three other schools – Cherry Creek Academy, Renaissance Charter School and Crestone Charter School – reported that the negotiations with their sponsoring districts regarding the employment of non-certificated personnel became strained. Crestone agreed to require non-certificated teachers to obtain their credentials within three years.

The questionnaire also asked charter schools whether changes in the philosophy or leadership of the sponsoring district's local board of education had resulted in differing interpretations of the scope of the waivers granted. All of the responding charter schools confirmed consistency of interpretation to date. This may be due to the fact that Colorado law requires a rigorous application procedure which yields a contract between the charter school and the sponsoring district that spells out the specific rights and obligations of the parties.

The cumulative record suggests that the existing process for permitting charter schools to secure waivers is adequate to enable these schools to overcome statutory barriers to the successful implementation of their distinctive programs. However, the waiver application and hearing process does require a considerable investment of time and effort on the part of both the charter schools and of CDE. (Proposed legislation to amend the Colorado Charter Schools Act by including a "super-waiver" provision has been considered by the Colorado General Assembly, but has not been enacted.)

Most of the waivers sought and granted to the Colorado charter schools in the study address the status and rights of adults in the schools (evaluation, compensation, governance authority) and do not directly address the educational program. This pattern reflects the nature of the Colorado's education policy infrastructure as a local control state. Colorado does not have state textbook selection, state graduation requirements or state mandated curriculum or curriculum frameworks. If Colorado regulated these areas at a state level, as many other states do, the pattern of waiver requests made by the charter schools would certainly need to be much more expansive in order for the schools to exercise the degree of autonomy over their educational programs that they presently enjoy.

It is also worth noting, however, that many Colorado charter schools are consciously trying to contribute leadership and innovation in the areas of governance, site-based decision making and employment policies. Central to the design and educational approach of many charter schools is a vision of parental and community engagement that is much broader than common practice. Many charter schools are also trying to implement accountability measures -- from shared governance to pay for performance -- that create a sense of shared responsibility for student results. These new governance models require the extensive degree of site autonomy that the waivers make possible.

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PART X- REFLECTIONS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS, SPONSORING DISTRICTS AND OTHERS REGARDING THE REFORM IMPACT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

It is certainly too early to conclude whether charter schools will have a major impact on public education in Colorado or whether their impact will be limited to the more modest contribution of offering an appealing alternative for a small percentage of Colorado students. The Act itself reflects the General Assembly's hope that charter schools will help "create an atmosphere in Colorado's public school system where research in developing different learning opportunities is actively pursued."

The implementation of charter schools in Colorado is a developmental process that is still ongoing, not an event that is completed. Therefore, both positive trends as well as issues of concern need to be monitored over time, with an emphasis on trying to understand not just whether the charter schools are succeeding, but why.

This section of the evaluation study explores the perspectives of three important groups regarding the impact of charter schools on public education in Colorado: the charter schools themselves, their sponsoring districts, and the major statewide education organizations (The Colorado Parent Teacher Association, the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Association of School Boards and the Colorado Federation of Teachers.)

The information for this section was obtained from these sources:

- **A series of focus groups of charter school administrators/board members held throughout the state in the spring and summer of 1998.** Approximately 30 charter school representatives participated in these focus groups.
- **A questionnaire that was sent to the 32 charter schools participating in this study.** Twenty-three of the schools completed and return the questionnaire.

- **A questionnaire that was sent to each of the 21 districts who sponsor the schools included in this study.** Eight of the sponsoring districts completed and returned the questionnaire.

- **Telephone interviews with representatives of major statewide education organizations** – the Colorado Parent Teacher Association, the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Association of School Boards and the Colorado Federation of Teachers - conducted by members of the evaluation team.

Copies of the questionnaires and focus group questions are included in the Appendix to this report.

The conclusions expressed in this section of the evaluation study do not represent consensus opinions of the various respondent groups, but rather are a collection of responses from individuals within each group.

The Perspective of Charter School Representatives

1. What has been the impact of charter schools on public education?

CHOICE

- Having a new choice, regardless of which choice the parents and the students make, has led to greater parental involvement in public education. Charter schools have given those parents most vocal and active, the "squeaky wheels," a place where they can be involved in a truly meaningful way.

- Charter schools have brought students who were formerly home schooled or enrolled in private schools into the public school system.

- Since charter schools have arrived on the scene, there is a greater level of awareness about the need to offer more choice to parents and students.

- The popularity and apparent success of several charter schools have led to spin-offs or replications. In at least two different districts there are examples of Core Knowledge schools that built up a large waiting list and created the demand for additional Core Knowledge schools.

- Some charter school representatives felt that districts often develop a bias or school of thought with respect to particular educational issues. Where charter schools have begun to offer another option to the district "party line" they may play a stabilizing role in the district.

NEW POSSIBILITIES ABOUT LOCAL SUPPORT

- Some charter schools have been very effective at drawing local support from their communities. Their example might lead public schools to consider how they, too, might find creative ways to better connect to and draw on the good will of local organizations.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

- Academically rigorous charter schools may have contributed to increased expectations on the part of other public schools, both by virtue of direct competition for students and by having an impact on feeder schools.

- Some charter schools have responded to inquiries from schools outside their district related to their curriculum or other program materials.

- The existence of charter schools may have caused school districts to be more responsive to parent concerns regarding curriculum and expectations. More specifically, some charter school representatives feel the presence and, in some cases, apparent success of some "back-to-basics" charters has helped send a message to their communities and districts that the basics should be taught and learned.

DIFFERENT STRUCTURES

- *Class size*. The way that charter schools use their resources may encourage other public educators to think about their priorities. The example of the charter school in one district led members of the community to ask: "Why can't all our schools have classes as small as those in the charter school?"

- *School size*. Other public schools might examine the size of their schools as they see charter schools serving well a number of students who have not succeeded in larger environments.

- *Clarity of mission*. The advantage of charter schools designed around clear missions is that they don't have to be "all things to all people." They can target a population that has not been well served in the community and meet their needs.

- *Special education*. Some charter school representatives suggest that individualized attention and strong parental involvement has made a positive difference for a number of special education students in their schools. Therefore, while a charter school might offer less special education, in the traditional sense, it might also be creating other structures that serve a number of special education students well.

- *Assessment*. One district is helping one of its charters, as well as one of its other "choice" schools, pilot a new national assessment program using portfolios for high school students (ACT's Portfolio Assessment System in Language Arts, Science, and Mathematics). If it proves effective it could be a program that other schools in the district interested in portfolio assessment might be able to replicate.

- *Multi-age/interdisciplinary approach.* One school has had teams of teachers from other districts come look at two of the key components of the school: a multi-age approach and an emphasis on interdisciplinary learning.

- *Full-day kindergarten.* Representatives from one charter school stated that two other schools in the sponsoring district will soon be offering full-day kindergarten in response, in part, to a full day program provided by the charter school.

- *Administration.* An administrative model being employed by several charter schools that places day-to-day leadership of the school in the hands of two people with distinctly different jobs—one overseeing the education of the students, and one responsible for the finances—might work well for other public schools.

DISTRICTS' MORE OPEN TO EXPANDED CHOICES

- Some charter school representatives suggested that their presence in their sponsoring district has made the district more open to expanded choices across the board. In districts that are growing rapidly, however, a number of respondents felt that their districts view charter schools as a convenient "release valve" for growth rather than as competition to whom they are "losing" students, or as innovating schools that have something to offer to the district as a whole.

TEACHERS

- Charter school representatives stated that a high number of teachers expressed interest in charter schools at career fairs. These teachers appeared to be eager to connect to a school that is more closely tied to their beliefs about schooling—rather than applying to a district where they might not have much control over which schools interview and hire them. These new teachers also seemed attracted to the innovation they consider possible in charter schools.

- Some charter school representatives expressed the belief that teachers can enter a sponsoring district from another district more easily through a charter school.

- Some charter school heads, having attained waivers to hire teachers who do not have a Colorado teaching license, are asking whether this practice will have an impact on teacher credential and hiring practices. A similar point was made about the hiring of administrators, as again, many charter school directors do not hold a Principal's Type D license.

ACCOUNTABILITY/EVALUATION

- Several charter representatives felt that charter schools have caused public schools to look at accountability in a new way, contributing to a statewide reform climate that is more focused on student results.

2. Through what mechanisms have the accomplishments/experiences of charter schools been shared with other public schools?

Most charter school representatives responded that there were no forums or formal mechanisms in place to share their successes and experiences, or that such communication was minimal. Several charter schools met regularly with an administrator from the sponsoring district. In some cases, representatives from other charter schools or alternative schools also participated in the meetings. Other charter schools made regular reports to the board of education of their sponsoring district. For still others, required written communications with their sponsoring districts (annual reports, renewal applications, school improvement plans, etc.) was the primary mechanism for sharing charter school experiences and accomplishments.

Some respondents suggested that informal mechanisms – school newsletters, professional networking, publishing school curriculum or other products, school visits – offer an effective way to transfer knowledge and experience. Some charter school administrators, teachers, governing board members and parents apparently tried to take advantage of these mechanisms on their own initiative and time.

The responses showed a strong divergence of experience with respect to the issue of whether the sponsoring districts encourage, or even value, this process of sharing. Some districts extended many and varied opportunities to the staff and governing boards of charter schools to be involved in district activities and to share their expertise and perspectives. Other districts offered no formal communication mechanisms and did not seem to view or value the charter schools as potential models for other schools.

3. Changes in the charter school law recommended by charter school representatives.

- Provide more assistance to help charter applicants identify sites. Some suggestions:

    1. The law should provide that any unused existing space owned by the district must be made available to new charter schools.

    2. Where there is no unused existing space owned by the district, money should be made available for the rent/purchase of private space or the charter school should receive full funding.

- Schools and districts should not be forced into an adversarial relationship in connection with negotiating the PPOR. One alternative is for charter schools to receive revenue-based financing and then negotiate for the purchase of desired district services, rather than the current expense-based approach to funding.

- Charter schools should be eligible for some of the money raised through bond issues.

- Several respondents expressed the hope that charter schools could attain the ability to borrow at lower rates. This would result in significant cost savings for charter schools seeking to purchase a building or undertake major renovations. Possible approaches include:

    1. Districts and charters could establish some criteria for a charter's financial stability, so that once it had met that criteria, the district would be willing to put its name on a bond request by the charter school. (This would not be a district bond request to voters; it would merely be the district using its name and resources to make the charter school's loan request insurable, which would create a much lower interest rate for the loan.)

    2. The state could guarantee a loan obligation undertaken by a charter school provided the school met certain criteria related to its financial health and well being.

    3. A third alternative is a state-created revolving loan fund that would provide a source of funds that charter schools could borrow from during stages of capital construction. With banks and other lenders less likely to make loans to these new organizations, the state could play a critical role in helping young charter schools acquire funds for capital construction.

- Several representatives see value in having another chartering authority besides the local district.

- Some charter school representatives would like the law to prohibit sponsoring districts from taking a percentage of funds out—as administrative costs for processing the grant—when the charter school receives a grant.

- All charter schools should have the ability to carry over funds from one year's operation to the next.

- Several representatives suggested that some kind of arbitration/mediation group should be available to work with schools and districts prior to taking a dispute to the state board of education for resolution. As it now stands, the district is expected to mediate the conflict, while also being a party to the conflict—an unsatisfactory alternative for the charter schools.

- Several representatives suggested that it would help charters to have the ability to decide if their programs will be effective for certain children. The purpose would not be to "boot out" problem students. The concern is that charter schools with distinct missions feel compelled, in some cases, to make drastic changes in the program in order to serve some students, defeating the purpose of being distinctive.

- Several suggested that a super waiver or blanket waiver provision would be a useful enhancement to the current law.

- Some expressed concern that new laws (HB 1267 was raised as an example) passed since charter school legislation was enacted might slowly erode the autonomy of charter schools and lead to the kind of micro-management from which charter schools were designed to be exempt.

The Perspective of Representatives of the Sponsoring Districts

Eight of the 21 sponsoring districts (38%) included in this evaluation study completed and returned the questionnaire. Accordingly, this discussion represents a fairly limited sampling of the range of opinion that exists.

1. What has been the impact of charter schools on public education? Have some accomplishments/experiences of charter schools been transferable to other public school settings?

- Nearly all district respondents noted the serious negative financial impact of charter schools on public school districts, particularly those of smaller size. This impact is felt in two ways. (1) Charter schools reduce the overall availability of funds for operating non-charter schools by reducing the student count without eliminating the commensurate overhead costs. (2) The administrative time necessary to negotiate contracts and manage relationships with charter schools has a negative financial impact on the sponsoring district.

- Several respondents acknowledged that charter schools have created additional public school choices, thereby promoting parent involvement and making schools more sensitive to the needs of diverse learners.

- One respondent suggested that charter schools have contributed to heightened criticism of public schools.

- Representatives from responding districts listed low class size, increased parent involvement, and standards development and alignment as among the charter school accomplishments that might be transferable to their other public schools

- The strong majority of responding districts did not have a formal mechanism in place for sharing the experiences of charter schools *with other public schools*. Representatives from charter schools tended to meet with their sponsoring district alone, or as a group of charter schools or alternative schools. They did not interact regularly their peers in other public schools.

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2. Changes in the charter school law recommended by representatives of sponsoring districts.

This list of proposed changes does not represent consensus opinions on the part of the sponsoring districts. Rather, is a collection of responses from the individual representatives of sponsoring districts who returned the questionnaire.

Many of the changes recommended by representatives of the sponsoring districts concerned **ways to mitigate the negative financial impact of charter schools on the district.** Suggestions included:

- Establish a capital outlay fund.
- Establish a declining enrollment formula to fund school district infrastructure for students remaining in other district schools.
- Provide more assistance/resources to charter school applicants with regard to identifying a site so that the burden does not fall on sponsoring districts.
- Undertake a review of the "actual costs" incurred by districts in connection with charter schools.
- Require all districts to fund charters the same to eliminate comparisons and arguments.
- Allow charter schools access to capital reserve funds.

Other suggestions included:

- Lengthen the period for review of charter applications.
- Establish an independent insurance authority for charter schools.
- Make clear what authority (state, county, municipality or district) is responsible for facility inspection when charter facilities are not district buildings.
- Permit review of charters on a yearly basis.
- Set a limit on the number of charter schools a district can have.
- Delete the appeal process for charter applications denied by local districts.

The Perspective of Representatives of Statewide Education Organizations

Members of the evaluation team conducted telephone interviews with representatives of the following statewide education organizations: Colorado Parent Teacher Association, the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Association of School Boards and the Colorado Federation of Teachers.

1. What has been the impact of charter schools on public education? Have some accomplishments/experiences of charter schools been transferable to other public school settings?

- On a positive note, charter schools have offered parents more choices than were available in traditional public schools. They have given parents an expanded opportunity to match the learning styles and needs of their individual children with a compatible educational approach. They have given parents who want their children to be taught with a specific curriculum (e.g. the Core Knowledge sequence) an opportunity to satisfy their preference within a public school context. Charter schools may have benefited public schools by offering a "relief valve" – new opportunities for students and their families who have not yet found a comfortable "fit" in the public school system.

- The emphasis of some charter schools on a core curriculum and on high behavioral expectations of students may be spreading to other public schools.

- The small size of charter schools and their ability to commit to a specific mission may be a strength. Charter schools may not be as exposed to the dynamics of the varying – and sometimes competing – demands that parents and society make of public schools.

- The theory that competition will drive change is not applicable in the context of public education. Most families expect that their neighborhood school will accommodate them instead of adopting a more defined focus.

- With regard to the transfer of knowledge, respondents suggested either that the charter schools have not been particularly innovative in their approaches or that the experiences of charter schools would not be replicable in other public schools because of the relative advantages enjoyed by charter schools. These advantages are perceived to include a more expansive waiver opportunity, looser accountability mechanisms and standards, more support in the "court of public opinion" and smaller class sizes.

- The major negative impact of charter schools on public education mentioned by the respondents was their significant financial drain on sponsoring school districts and other public schools. This impact has been particularly dramatic in some small districts.

2. Changes in the charter school law recommended by representatives of statewide educational organizations (PTA, CEA, CASE, CASB and CFT.)

The following list of proposed changes does not represent the consensus opinions of these educational organizations. Rather, it is a collection of responses made by the individuals who participated in the telephone interviews.

- Amend the law to address issues related to charter school governance and the frequent turnover of administrators in some charter schools.

- Provide more clarity on the issue of who is finally liable for debts taken on by charter schools – the schools themselves or their sponsoring districts.

- Provide districts with greater oversight over the financial management of charter schools.

- Extend the same wavier process and criteria that apply to charter schools to other public schools in the state.

- Require charter applicant groups to demonstrate that they will be doing something different or unique to justify their opening. It does not seem that charter applicants have to complete a very rigorous process to show that what they want to do cannot already be done in the regular public school system.

- Explore whether it is appropriate to require that charter school teachers attend certain kinds of district professional development or training (e.g. related to standards implementation).

- Require all teachers in charter schools to stand for some kind of review. All brand new teachers ought to have a mentor, a good induction process and support with regard to classroom management. The state charter law or district contracts with charter school organizers could include these requirements.

- Tighten state regulation and/or district oversight needs to ensure that charter schools adequately meet health and safety standards.

- Provide more oversight, through CDE, to ensure private schools do not become charter schools. Similarly, districts should not be allowed to privatize a public school by using the charter school law to effectively turn the school over to a private organization.

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

APPENDIX

- Individual School Data Matrix
- Waiver Impact Questionnaire
- 1998 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation - School Questionnaire
- 1998 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation - Sponsoring District Questionnaire
- Teacher Survey
- School-by-School Analysis of Parent Surveys
- Analysis of Open-Ended Questions in Teacher Survey

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INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL DATA MATRIX

Contact:

(Please correct/update contact information)

DATA ITEM	1996-97	1997-98
STUDENTS Grades served		
Does the school apply any admission criteria?		
Attendance rate		
Retention Rate - defined as the percentage of students who re-enroll in the following school year.		
Mobility rate - defined as the percentage of students who disenroll for any reason during the school year.		
Suspensions		
Expulsions		
Has the school adopted a discipline policy/code that is different than the one in effect in the sponsoring district?		
Waiting List (as of end of 1997-98 school year)		
How many of your students came from home schools, private schools and other public schools at the time they were first enrolled in your school?	Home School: Private School: Other Public:	Home School: Private School: Other Public:
FACILITY Who owns the school's facility? (district, private, other public)		
Annual Rent - % of total budget		
Square feet/student		
Renovation/building improvement costs		

GOVERNANCE Board Composition	Parents - Teachers- Students - Administrator - Community- Other-	
Has the structure (number of members, composition of members) of the governing board changed since the school's opening?		
Who makes policy decisions?		
Who makes day-to-day decisions?		
Does the school provide formal orientation or training for board members?		
How many board members have left the governing board before the end of their terms?		
How many directors has the school employed since its opening?		
For how many years was your original charter granted?		
Is the school operated by a for-profit corporation?		
PARENT INVOLVEMENT Parent contract required?		
Total parent hours volunteered		
% or number of parents who volunteer		
Does school regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey?		
FUNDING Revenue - total budget		
% of district PPOR		
Income sources other than PPOR (including federal, state, local and private funding) - list source and amount		

Please state whether the school receives the following services from the sponsoring district as part of the negotiated PPOR rate paid by the district to the school, for payment, or not at all. If the services are provided for payment, please state the fee and how it is determined.		
Insurance		
Food services		
Maintenance		
Legal services		
Payroll services		
Accounting/Budget services		
Special education services to students with IEP's		
Professional development services/support		
Transportation services		
Student assessment services		
Surplus furniture, classroom equipment		
Access to district purchasing office		
Facility		
Other (Please list)		

STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF COLORADO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS
WAIVER IMPACT QUESTIONNAIRE - 1998

FOR:

Name and title of person completing this questionnaire:

____

Telephone Number:____________________ Fax Number:____________________

1. The information below summarizes the waivers requested by your school from the State Board of Education, the rationale for the waivers and your alternative plan for dealing with the issues addressed by the statutes being waived. This information was drawn from the waiver petition. Your review of this information assures both that our interpretation of the written documents is accurate and that any changes or evolution in your approach are captured. If any information in this table is incorrect, please correct it as necessary. Also, please state whether the waiver, in fact, successfully removed the barrier(s) to the school's educational program that it was intended to address. If the waiver was not sufficient to remove the barrier, please explain why not. Finally, please describe the waiver's impact (i.e. how it made a difference) on the school's educational program.

WAIVER:
RATIONALE:
ALTERNATIVE:

DID WAIVER REMOVE BARRIER?:

IMPACT OF WAIVER:

2. Identify the two to three waiver requests that were most central to the charter school being able to carry out its vision. Please provide a short explanation of why these waiver requests were most central.

3. Did the sponsoring district, at any time, discourage or preclude the charter school from pursuing a waiver of state law from the State Board of Education? If yes, please explain the circumstances.

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SPONSORING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Name of District: ______________________________

Name/Title of Person Completing the Questionnaire:

____

Telephone: ______________________

1. What overall impact, if any, have charter schools had on public education in Colorado and/or in your district?

2. What accomplishments, lessons or experiences, if any, have the charter schools in your district transferred to other public school settings? Through what avenue or mechanism did this transfer occur?

3. What specific changes, if any, would you recommend be made to the Colorado Charter Schools Act?

4. What financial impact, if any, have charter schools had on your district?

5. Number of charter applications that have been submitted in your district _____
Number of charters granted by your district _______
Current number of charter schools operating in your district __________

6. Please describe the process (or attach a copy of the relevant policy/procedures) used by your district to renew charters.

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION
SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. One of the primary legislative purposes for charter schools is to serve as research and development sites for other public schools. Please describe the communication forums or mechanisms that presently exist within your sponsoring district, if any, to share your experiences and successes as a charter school with the administration and other schools in the sponsoring district.

2. Has your school completed a process to renew the term of your original charter?

If so, please provide the following information:

a). Please briefly describe the renewal process, including any applications or forms you had to complete, any public hearings, and any site reviews or other district-level evaluation processes that were applied.

b) Was the renewal *process* well-defined in a written policy? If so, was the written policy followed in connection with your renewal process?

c) Were the *criteria* for renewal well-defined in a written policy? If so, was the written policy followed in connection with your renewal process?

d) As you have been among the first few schools to complete the charter renewal process, would you offer any recommendations on how the process might be improved for other charter schools?

1998 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

This instrument was developed by the Hudson Institute (in cooperation with the Brookings Institute) and is used with their permission.

Instructions

Participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous. The information you provide will never be associated with you personally. Questionnaires are marked for state and school identification only

Please answer Questions 1-9 by completely filling the box(es) next to your choice(s) in a dark #2 pencil or black ink (ball-point or marker). Open-ended questions (10-16) should be answered in the space provided

1. **Present Certification Status**

☐ Currently certified to teach in this state
☐ Certified in other states but not in this one
☐ Working on certification in this state
☐ Not now certified in this state, not actively working on it

2. **How big of a factor were the following in your decision to teach in this school?**	**Big factor**	**Somewhat of a factor**	**Not a factor**
School's educational philosophy	☐	☐	☐
School size	☐	☐	☐
Class size	☐	☐	☐
Convenient location	☐	☐	☐
Opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues	☐	☐	☐
Eager/good students	☐	☐	☐
Committed parents	☐	☐	☐
Teachers have more authority here	☐	☐	☐
Good administrators	☐	☐	☐
Wanted to teach in (and help shape) a new school	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty finding other suitable positions	☐	☐	☐
Attractive compensation/benefits package	☐	☐	☐
Less bureaucracy	☐	☐	☐
Less influenced by union contracts	☐	☐	☐
Safety	☐	☐	☐

[Over, please]

3. How satisfied are you with specific features of this school and your experience in it?	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Uncertain	Not too satisfied	Quite dissatisfied
Educational philosophy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School size	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fellow teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parental involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administrators	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Governing board	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teacher participation in school decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instructional materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-teaching responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Salary level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fringe benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The challenge of starting a new school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relations with local school district	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relations with teacher union	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relations with local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please evaluate this school's success so far in these areas:	Much success	Some success	Little or no success
Educating hard-to-educate children	☐	☐	☐
Providing an excellent educ alternative for children who need it	☐	☐	☐
Developing a strong curriculum and powerful teaching methods	☐	☐	☐
Integrating technology with the curriculum	☐	☐	☐
Building a high quality, high performing staff	☐	☐	☐
Running smoothly as an organization	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining necessary resources	☐	☐	☐

[Over, please]

[Question 4: Continued from previous page] **Please evaluate this school's success so far in these areas:**	Much success	Some success	Little or no success
Involving parents	☐	☐	☐
Attracting the kinds of students it hoped to have	☐	☐	☐
Setting and maintaining high academic standards	☐	☐	☐
Raising student achievement	☐	☐	☐
Providing for children's (and staff's) safety	☐	☐	☐
Maintaining discipline and order	☐	☐	☐
Providing necessary training/staff development for teachers	☐	☐	☐
Using suitable means of assessing pupil performance	☐	☐	☐
Retaining students	☐	☐	☐
Involving teachers in decision-making	☐	☐	☐
Giving teachers adequate prep time	☐	☐	☐
Giving teachers the instructional supplies and materials they need	☐	☐	☐
Having a positive influence on education in this community	☐	☐	☐

5. **Are you currently a member of a teachers' union?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. **Have you previously been a member of a teachers' union?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. **Do you plan to be back at this school next year?**

☐ I hope so ☐ Not sure ☐ I hope to be elsewhere

8. **What would you likely be doing this year if you weren't teaching in this school?**

☐ Teaching in another charter school
☐ Teaching in a regular public school
☐ Teaching in a private school
☐ Other *[Please describe]* ______________________________

9. **How does your present salary in this school compare with your likely earnings if you were doing whatever else you said, in the previous question, you might be doing this year?**

☐ Salary here is significantly higher (more than 10%)
☐ Salary here is slightly higher
☐ Salary here is about the same
☐ Salary here is slightly lower
☐ Salary here is significantly lower (more than 10%)

[Over, please]

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10. Before you came to this school, how many years had you spent: *[Please write one digit per box]*

☐☐ Teaching in public schools (include part-time and substitute teaching)
☐☐ Teaching in private schools
☐☐ Home-schooling
☐☐ Teaching in other institutions (e g college, business, military)

11. Major fields of study:

Undergraduate Education (specify what level or type) ____________
Arts/science (specify major subject) ____________
Other professional/technical (specify field) ____________
Post-graduate Education (specify what level or type) ____________
Arts/science (specify major subject) ____________
Other professional/technical (specify field) ____________

12. Other personal/professional/career experience. Besides teaching, please briefly state other major personal, professional and occupational experience you had prior to coming to this school:

____

____

13. What is the biggest difference between this school and your previous one(s)?

____

____

14. Greatest source of personal/professional satisfaction at this school:

____

____

15. Greatest source of discontent:

____

____

16. This school's most serious unsolved problem:

____

____

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[End of questionnaire]

SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL ANALYSIS OF PARENT SURVEYS

From 12 schools that sent in their 1997-98 parent surveys

1. Academy of Charter Schools

The survey conducted in June of 1998 had 137 responses from parents; 12.4% of those parents had had a student or students in the school four years, and 12.4% had students in the school three years. Nearly two thirds of the parents surveyed had a student at the school for one (35%) or two (32.1%) years. Less than 10% of these students had children who enrolled at Academy of Charter during the 1997-98 school year.

To get some comparisons, Academy of Charter School asked parents:
- if "the typical school in the nation meets the needs of most students" (12.6% said they agreed or strongly agreed);
- if "my child's previous school met the needs of my student" (26% said they agreed or strongly agreed); and
- if "Academy of Charter Schools meets the needs of my student" (63% said they agreed and 22.2% said they strongly agreed).

Other questions asked how well informed parents felt about *what* their child was being taught, *how* their child was being taught, and about how progress is being *assessed* (65-75% felt informed or very informed). The survey also asked about discipline and how safe the environment seemed to be (again asking for comparisons with previous schools for their children), about how well the school was preparing students for college, and about instructional effectiveness in each of the major academic disciplines. There were also seven questions about school climate ("my child likes school"—73.5% agreed or strongly agreed; "my child feels safe at school"—78.1% agreed or strongly agreed), six questions about administrative staff effectiveness, and four questions about communication. Almost 87% of the parents indicated they felt they are given a sufficient opportunity to participate in the school.)

This was one of the few surveys that asked parents why they had chosen to send their child to the school. Of the four choices, the two most popular were: "I wanted higher standards and expectations held for all students" and "I wanted a more disciplined classroom and school environment."

2. Aspen Community School

The survey conducted in May of 1998 garnered responses from 23 parents of the roughly 90 families at Aspen Community School (ACS), or a percentage of 25%.

Eight questions were asked–though the eighth question was a request for volunteers to work with reading, speech, or in the classrooms: "How can you help?" The other questions dealt with larger issues for ACS: what is the philosophy and approach of the school, is it a good choice for your child—why or why not? In response to this question, 100% of those who responded felt the school was a good choice, and listed their top reasons as:

- the Social-Emotional program;
- the individualized learning opportunities and small class size;
- the way the academic program was presented to their child;
- the team of teachers and the multi-aged learning centers.

The school also sought to find out how parents saw their role in the school, how they felt the school was doing with parent involvement, and asked for ideas on how to get parents more involved ("... in attending Parent Council Meetings? Would it help to have the meetings quarterly? Include a potluck? Provide childcare? Or invite guest speakers?")

A survey asked a couple of specific questions about the program—its Social-Emotional program, and the method of Portfolio Assessment. Like several other parent surveys, it also asked parents "for comments on areas of concern that you believe we should focus on" in the next school year. In response, parents wrote comments on several issues, including discipline and supervision, higher academic expectations, apprenticeships and service learning.

3. Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy

Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy's Parent Survey appears to be done in conjunction with the Colorado Springs School District 11's Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation. The survey was given to 180 parents; 154 responded – an 85% completion rate. Parents were asked to respond to 38 questions. The five options they could choose were: very satisfied, satisfied, neutral/don't know, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.

On some of the broader questions parents showed a high degree of support.

- In response to questions about overall satisfaction with curriculum, 59.9% were very satisfied and 38.2% were satisfied.
- Asked about teachers, 60.5% were very satisfied and 31.6% were satisfied.
- Asked about administrators, 47.4% were very satisfied and 39.5% were satisfied.
- Asked about the total educational program, 64.5% were very satisfied and 33.6% were satisfied.

The school also asks a series of rather intriguing questions that few other schools have asked. The survey invited parents to comment about the time teachers spend with students: 39.5% were very satisfied and 46.7% were satisfied. Other questions asked about the extent to which CMCA reinforces values taught at home, and about opportunities available to challenge advanced students.

The survey asked some more familiar questions as well: parent satisfaction with a variety of elements of the program—reading, spelling, reasoning and writing, history/geography, science, art, music, physical education, and the amount of homework expected.

Two impressive figures were the percentage of parents who said their child's overall satisfaction with the school was satisfactory or very satisfactory, 95%, and the percentage of parents who are satisfied or very satisfied with the total educational program at the school—98%!

4. Community of Learners

Community of Learners received 24 responses from parents; the students of these parents had been in the school an average of 2.62 years. They could answer 1 (poor performance) through 5 (outstanding).

The surveys asked about:

- *academic curriculum & instruction* - And specific elements of their program (multiage grouping, service learning, individualized learning plans, etc.)
- *student evaluation and assessment*
- *communications* - And specific manners of communication – newsletter, parent meetings, board meetings, staff meeting, etc.
- *Organizational structure and school governance*
- *Discipline and learning environment*
- *Budget and finances*
- *Parent volunteering and involvement*
- *Family needs* - (Does COL meet your student's needs? Does COL meet your needs as a parent?)

Responses averaged out to at least 3.00 on all 35 questions, except the one that asked about standards-based assessments, where the average response was 2.55. Parents at COL obviously feel more positive about portfolio assessments (average response 3.96). Responses on the academic curriculum and instruction were strong, especially on outdoor labs and "intensives" (average score 4.52), service learning (4.04), and advising (4.00).

Parents' rating of the administrative team (4.52) was the highest score of all 35 questions. The survey also invited comments and the school compiled those comments in a page and a half of quotes. The feedback ranged from praise to criticism.

5. Core Knowledge Charter School

Core Knowledge Charter School (CKCS) had 88% of the parents participate in its 1998 survey. CKCS has been asking most of the same 14 questions for three straight years, so it can follow some trends over time. Those questions address:

- School Climate
- Operating Council
- Director
- School Standards, Conduct and Discipline

The 1998 results show increased satisfaction in some categories (school climate improved from 77% in 1997 to 91% in 1998) and increased concern in others (ratings of the operating council's communication declined from 60% to 49%). Overall the parents felt that the school had done better in 1997-98 than it had the previous year in 12 of 14 categories in which they were surveyed.

CKCS also added four new questions from the survey it had offered in the past, inquiring into specific aspects of the school's operations.

To hear from parents about teaching and learning, CKCS has also asked about 50 specific elements of the program (challenge in reading, science instruction, progress in Spanish, quality of homework, high standards for academics, etc.). The survey allows just one of two responses: those satisfied or very satisfied, or, the other answer—not or not at all satisfied. In 1997-98, in 44 of the 50 categories, at least 90% of the parents said they were satisfied or very satisfied, and in virtually all categories the responses were more positive than they had been the previous year.

In addition, the survey invited comment from parents on the academic program, asked them to write comments about any concerns that have not been addressed with the relevant teacher, and asked middle school parents how well they feel their child has been prepared for high school.

6. Jefferson Academy Charter School

At Jefferson Academy Charter School (JACS), 96% of the parents participated in its 1998 survey. JACS asks parents to respond to 31 questions, and offers five options as responses: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, or no opinion, or for some categories the five possible responses are needs improving, average, good, outstanding, not sure.

The questions range from the general ("JACS meets the needs of my student" – 98% agreed or strongly agreed) to the specific- ("How good a job do you think we are doing in teaching the following subjects," followed by a list of eight disciplines). Results indicate most are satisfied with the teaching of reading/language arts (14% responded good and 83% responded outstanding). Over 90% of the parents, in fact, responded "good" or "outstanding" on all eight disciplines.

The school also asks parents for their opinion of how the teacher "does a good job of modifying the work to meet my child's needs" (90% agree or strongly agree), if the amount of homework is appropriate (95% agree or strongly agree), and if "my child's teacher responds to my questions and concerns" (97% agreed or strongly agreed).

JA also asks a set of questions about school climate, administrative and staff effectiveness, and communication. Two figures that were especially impressive: 99% of the parents said that they agreed (28%) or strongly agreed (71%) that "My child likes school"; and 100% said that they agreed (19%) or strongly agreed (81%) that "The school climate encourages strong character development in its students."

7. Lewis Palmer Charter Academy

The Lewis Palmer Charter Academy (LCPA) asked families to complete the school survey in the spring of 1998. Surveys were returned by 27% of the school's families.

Nine questions were asked, including:

- Does LCPA consistently uphold high rigorous standards?
- Has the LCPA board been responsive to parents' concerns?
- Is the LCPA board insuring that the mission statement is being met?

- Is the school fulfilling its mission to create and offer a friendly, caring and positive environment?

Other questions were asked about communication and school leadership. Parents were also asked if they believed LCPA "is a superior school" (the vast majority checked "It is" or "Would like to believe it is," stating that the reasons were "better academics, good environment, and excellent teachers and staff.") The school asked an interesting question of families: "to better understand the educational philosophy of our parents, given the choice, would you rather your child meet basic objectives and receive an 'A' or be thoroughly challenged and possibly received a lower grade?" In response, 70% of the parents took the second choice, preferring that their child be thoroughly challenged.

The ninth question stated: "Do you have any other concern about LCPA that has not been addressed by this survey?" The school received comments on a range of issues, including parental input on uniforms, the building, the school's finances, homework, and the safety of the drop-off/pick-up procedures.

8. Mountain View Core Knowledge School

In May of 1998 parents returned 143 surveys from a student body of 153—a 94% completion rate.

The school asked 30 questions and asked parents to respond with any score between a 1 (strongly disagree) or a 5 (strongly agree).

Many questions asked parents to comment on the child's academic needs being met in a host of disciplines: reading, language arts, spelling, mathematics, history and geography, computer technology, Spanish, library, music, art and physical education. History and geography were rated the highest (94% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child's academic needs were being met in history and geography); reading was second (91%); math and science tied at third (90%).

A remarkable 97% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were satisfied with the Core Knowledge Curriculum, and the same percentage said overall MVCKS has high academic standards (on that last question 80% of the parents *strongly* agreed). There was less satisfaction from parents that their child's academic needs were being met in computer technology ((71% agreed or strongly agreed).

MVCKS asked parents if the school uses assessment techniques that adequately measure performance, and if national assessment used by the school adequately represent students' educational levels of achievement. It also asked questions about communication, about whether the school has a high standard for student behavior (96% agreed or strongly agreed), and about whether the school is a safe and secure environment.

Parents showed enthusiastic support for the school. Asked if the school provides "a stimulating and challenging educational environment for my child," 95% of the parents surveyed said they agreed or strongly agreed. Asked if, "overall, I am satisfied with the education my child is receiving at MVCKS," 96% of the parents surveyed said they agreed or strongly agreed.

9. The Renaissance School

The Renaissance School Parent Survey was conducted in March 1998; 99 parents responded. The survey asked 23 questions—21 of them offering parents five options: NA (does not apply), or 1 through 4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strong agree. As the school is broken into four "castles," parents were asked to state which castle their boy or girl was in as well. The survey also invited parents to respond to two more open-ended questions: "What do you value most about your child's experience at Renaissance?" and "What concerns you most about your child's experience at Renaissance?"

Some of the questions asked parents about the school's goals and approaches: 93% said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they "believe in the school's mission and basic beliefs," and 93% also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they "understand the instructional practices and structures used at Renaissance."

Other questions were more specific and asked about some of the educational strategies used at the school ("investigations," multi-age classrooms, and Montessori approach in early grades). The survey asked parents if they were satisfied with the individual attention given by teachers (80% agreed or strongly agreed) and if "I believe every child is treated with respect by teachers, staff and students" (88% agreed or strongly agreed). And there were questions about communication in general. The survey asked if "ongoing communication with my child's teacher is satisfactory" (85% agreed or strongly agreed), and specifically if parents were satisfied with the communication and responsiveness of the education director, business director, volunteer coordinator, office staff, board, Student Accountability Committee, and the Before and After Care.

10. Stargate

Stargate had 88 responses to its May1998 parent survey. The survey combined a set of 11 questions, to which parents could respond "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or "strongly disagree," along with an opportunity to provide written comments on these 11 questions. The school produced three pages of those comments together with the results of its parent survey.

The three highest scores were responses to "Our child's school activities are discussed at home often" (96% strongly agree or agree), "I feel I have adequate opportunities to be involved in my child's education at Stargate" (95%), and "my child's relationships with his/her teacher are good" (90%). The survey indicated strong parental satisfaction with the school, with "my child's relationships with his/her peers," and with their child's academic progress. Asked if "overall, my child is more successful at Stargate than at previous schools," 55% said they strongly agreed, and 19% said they agreed.

In addition, the school types up and shares the parents' responses (six pages of comments) to three open-ended questions:

- "What do you see as the most positive aspects of Stargate?"
- "What do you think we should do to improve Stargate?" and,
- "Additional comments."

Stargate is a school designed, in part, to meet the needs of gifted students. The six pages from these parents reveal much enthusiasm for the school's ability to offer the students a program that is challenging, where they are with peers of similar ability, where they have small classes, individual learning plans, and many field trips. There were also many kind words for a "dedicated" and "enthusiastic" teaching staff.

11. Summit Middle School

Summit Middle School's Parent Satisfaction Survey was sent out in the spring of 1998; 80 surveys were returned.

Perhaps reflecting its mission as a school offering a "rigorous" curriculum based on the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program, Summit's parent survey is focused heavily on the Core Subjects. Parents are asked to say if, with each subject, the *Level of difficulty* is
About Right Between Too Hard Too easy Don't Know

Similarly, they are asked to provide a response to the *Pace* of that class or subject for their child.

Then they are asked to say if they are "Satisfied with critical thinking development, with instructional approaches/activities, with materials, with content, with skill development, and with their child's understanding of expectations."

Parents were asked to respond to this level of specific questioning on English (with specific replies for each of the four years of English taught), Foreign Language (broken down by courses—there are four years of French offered, three years of German, and four years of Spanish), Social Studies (again, with specific responses for each of the three courses—World History, Asia/Government, and American History), Math (seven different classes), and Science (four different classes). The survey also invites parents to comment as well. The final report of the survey included these comments—which were both complimentary and critical, with specific comments on teachers, curriculum, and their child's engagement and progress.

The school also asked four general questions, including:
1) "Satisfaction with Summit," to which 77 of 80 parents said Yes, 2 "Between," and one a No, and
2) "Satisfaction with the level of challenge," to which 76 of 80 said Yes, 2 "Between," and 2 a No.

Summit also asked several questions about communication with parents and discipline: how aware they are of discipline policy; their rating of discipline; and their satisfaction with handling of any incidents. Finally, the survey invited parents to offer their thoughts on "What should Summit's goals be for the coming year?" and any other comments parents might want to offer. The final results include five pages of typed comments listing what parents had to say.

12. Swallows Charter Academy

Swallows Charter Academy gave its parents survey in January; 76% of the parents responded. Swallows asked parents to respond to eight major questions, including:

- Overall environment of the school
- Communication level (school to parents)
- Homework level my child has been receiving
- What is the most positive aspect of Swallows Charter?
- What area(s) do you think could be improved?
- Satisfaction levels with subject areas taught at the school: math, science, English, history, geography, computers, fine arts, and ethics.

68% said they were extremely pleased with the overall environment and 30% said it was average or acceptable. Most all parents—88% of those who responded—were extremely pleased with the communication level.

Swallows also used the 1998 survey to invite parents to offer thoughts on the future direction of the school. Swallows is a middle school; the school community has explored whether to expand up (high school) or down (elementary grades). The survey found 61% of the parents favored seeing the school add high school grades, as compared to 39% who wanted it to add elementary grades.

While parents expressed some concern about the teaching of science, in all other disciplines there seems enormous parent satisfaction. In English, History, Geography, Computers, Fine Arts and Ethics, 100% of the parents felt either satisfied or felt that the teaching of that discipline was a definite strength for the school.

Analysis of Open-Ended Questions in Teacher Survey
1998 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study

What is the biggest difference between this school and your previous one(s)?

Most common responses:
- Curriculum
- Administration and staff
- Focus/challenging academics
- Parent involvement/support
- Administrative support
- Class size

Teachers commented on over twenty different areas where they saw large differences between their charter school and the schools they had worked in previously. Some comments were neutral ("Can't compare anything with the New York City Board of Education"), or presented as facts—without indicating if this was a good change or not ("discipline," "resources," "facility"). Sixteen comments were critical or negative ("Lack of discipline/limits," "lack of music and art," "less district support," "stress"). But for the most part the differences teachers emphasized were positive ones.

Twenty-four teachers said the biggest difference was in the **curriculum**. They spoke of their school's curriculum as "consistent," "focused," "solid," "excellent," and "demanding." Other comments were: "Real teaching/learning in a consistently demanding curriculum." "Continuity year to year with this curriculum." "Integrated learning/multi-aged." "Back-to-basics and phonics here versus whole language at previous school." "Emphasis in science and social studies." "Interest in outdoors/service learning." "Authenticity of curriculum."

Nineteen teachers spoke highly of the team spirit and common focus of the **administration and staff**. "Everyone's commitment to the school's goals and the school's success." "Whole staff has a common vision." "All staff committed to same philosophy." "Dedication of board, staff, parents and students/ "Staff enthusiasm, teamwork, and commitment." "Friendship among staff." "I am more part of the team."

Nineteen also pointed to a **focus on challenging academics**. Eight wrote specifically about "more stress on academic achievement," "high academic standards," and "high expectations." Others wrote: "High standards and expectations that are not lowered (regardless of student, community, or parental pressure.)." "Less dumb down." "Grades are based on mastering subject matter, not on protecting self-esteem." "Academic content is much better." "Great educational environment – much learning."

Seventeen teachers had almost the exact same comment about a key difference they observed at their charter school: "More **parent participation**/involvement/commitment."

While the change in leadership at many charter schools has proved problematic, many teachers (16) spoke highly of the **administrative support** at their school. "Administrative support here has been great." "Very well run." "Better administration. " "Greater involvement of administration with student concerns." "Constant evaluations by administration to improve teaching skills."

For 14 teachers, smaller **class size** and student-teacher ratios are a major difference. Teachers at one school, though, were concerned about *larger* class sizes (28 per class).

Greatest source of personal/professional satisfaction at this school:

Most satisfaction has come from
- Students
- Roles teachers can play
- Fellow teachers
- Administrators
- Curriculum
- Organization/whole school

The two areas that are proving to be the greatest source of satisfaction for teachers at charter schools are the **students** themselves, and the **roles teachers are allowed to play**. There were close to 80 teachers who spoke of their students as their principal source of satisfaction. Many commented on watching a student's growth and success. In this case the words of the teachers seems worth including. Similarly, to capture the feeling of what charter school teachers consider to be their good fortune—the greater freedom and the chance to have a larger voice in determining the curriculum and in the well being of the school—the following pages includes direct quotes.

Students

Student gains/growth – (2) (numbers indicate how many gave this same answer)
I really get to know my students and their families.
Close contact, relationship with students.
The kids/children /students- (8)
Great students
Wonderful students!
Excellent students!
Working with the middle school students!
Working with children.
Children learning and understanding the curriculum
Integrating experiential education and seeing it work for these students!
Watching students enjoy learning.
Accomplishments of students.
Seeing the children achieve mastery.
Seeing students succeed and grow academically.
Students enjoy my classes and take what I've taught them home to share with their parents.
Watching the children learn and the rapid pace in which they learn.
Watching students perform at the top of their abilities.
The students when they accomplish/understand a concept that they felt they could not before.
The students all learn and grow.
Opportunity to teach a handful of the best students in the city.
The great source of satisfaction comes from the quality of students.
High achieving students.
Improving great kids.
Working with the kids – (3)
Teaching children.
Teaching such a needy group of kids.

Working with needy students.
Working with special needs and behaviorally challenged students.
I can teach in this school. Students want to learn, so I don't need to do a lot of management.
One-on-one individualized interactions with students.
Ability to allow students to be individuals.
Individualized learning and good relationships with students.
Relationships built with students.
Quality of time with the kids.
Student achievement – (2)
Feel success on an individual basis: some students have grown and I've had the pleasure of being a part of that growth.
Student success—personal as well as academic.
Seeing interest level and skill development of students.
Progress of students in reading.
Seeing students succeed in reading.
Succeeding in teaching math.
Seeing low achieving students develop confidence in their abilities and watching their achievement/abilities develop.
Reaching tough kids; teaching them the value of structure.
Realizing the impact a compassionate and patient teacher can have on students.
Gains and levels the students are at.
Seeing students move to the next level.
Students who learn and are thankful for education and teachers.
Student growth/progress/success/achievement – (5)
Students' improvement in knowledge.
By end of first semester all my kindergarten students can decode and by the end of the year they can read.
High achievement of students (relative to ability).
High test scores compared to rest of district.
Higher test scores without wasting time teaching to the test.
The fact that my middle school students really can write and read challenging material.
The students: after building the relationships with students and groups, incredible results occur. Students gain self-respect.
When students succeed.
Seeing the growth in students over two-to-three years
Seeing children learn/explore and improve in athletics and sports skills and individual cardiovascular exercise!
The students and their eagerness to learn.
Committed students who will pursue excellence.
Children turning into educated, responsible young adults.
Students are responsible for learning.
I love my class!!!

Roles for teachers

Being able to embrace my own personal educational philosophy at the school in which I teach.
Freedom to be creative.
Freedom to teach what we feel is important and follow the students' leads.
Freedom to teach what we think necessary.

Freedom, less bureaucracy, control over school.
Academic freedom in the classroom
I like having the ability to make decisions that are best for my class.
Collaborative nature of decision-making.
Creative possibilities.
I enjoy teaching.
Knowing that and the students were successful at what we set out to do, teach and learn, respectively.
Getting an incredible teaching experience.
Working one-on-one with director and developing a middle school.
Teacher directed school.
Teacher input towards administrative decisions.
Involvement in decisions and program implementation.
In-service design.
High quality of staff development programs – (2)
Professional growth/training/opportunities – (5)
My ability to improve due to staff development and training.
The ability to grow as a professional; the resources and opportunities are incredible!
Great sense of teaming/sharing; I have grown so much as a professional educator.
Challenges for professional development.
Opportunity to be involved in decision-making.
The amount of possible influence I have.
They give me a lot of responsibility.
I am my own boss and supervise others.
Mentoring other teachers.
Development of the Core Knowledge curriculum – (2)
Designing and running an excellent PE program.
Incredible amount of opportunity.
Opportunity to oversee difficult programs such as science and invention fairs
Bigger voice in decisions.
Creating new curriculum and inventing our own meaningful programs.
Building a new program; starting the school.
Being a part of creating this school from conception.
My own room; control over the class structure and curriculum.
Making changes that directly relate to how children learn.

The three other areas that were most commonly pointed to as sources of satisfaction included: **teachers** (29), **administrators (**13 comments), the **curriculum** (9 comments), and the **organization/whole school**. (8 comments):

There were 29 who said teachers—their **colleagues**—have been their greatest source of satisfaction: “working with a wonderful staff/outstanding colleagues,” “dedication (of other teachers),” “camaraderie of everyone, “encouragement from other staff,” “good communication and cooperation among the staff.” Many, too, were quite pleased with the qualities of their **administrators**, and the support he or she has provided to them. A number, too, are quite pleased with the **curriculum** they are offering their students: “Quality of curriculum,” “Curriculum is outstanding, interesting, challenging.” “I spend most of my time teaching wonderful curriculum.” And some are particularly proud of their school’s success as a new **organization**: “The growth and success of the school.” “Two years a Colorado School of Excellence.” “I am proud to be part of an organization recognized for its excellence” (another Irwin Award Winner).

Greatest source of discontent

Top concerns:

- Physical space/facility/resources
- Time/work load
- Parents
- Leadership/Board
- Staff/teachers
- Salary/benefits

Teachers were asked to comment on their “greatest source of discontent.” There were more than 35 comments on **Physical space/facility/resources**, some of which overlapped with concern about a lack of funds. Comments included: “Space limitations,” “No walls, too much noise,” “Our leased facility is too small,” “Lack of good facilities,” poor facilities,” “no art room or adequate work space,” need for lab supplies,” “inadequate library,” and “lack of instructional materials.”

Almost as many (32) spoke of their **work load** with considerable frustration: “too much to do,” “never enough time!!!” “**time** commitments above other schools,” “time demands,” and “no planning time.” In some cases the many expectations seem related to the challenge of creating a new school: “Sometimes everything is a crisis. People are only functioning in survival mode.” “Feel like we are constantly re-inventing the wheel.” “Not near enough time to meet the school’s expectations on a day-to-day basis–LONG HOURS.” One wit simply lamented one of the outcomes of all this work: “Gray hair.”

While one of the major sources of satisfaction for charter school teachers has been the **parents**, at the same time many teachers have found this a troublesome issue as well. Of the 19 who made comments, several were concerned about the “lack of involvement or support from families,” while others spoke of “overconcerned, controlling parents,” complaining and unrealistic parents,” “parent involvement that detracts from the learning environment – censorship, continued complaints,” and parents treating teachers in a rude manner.

There were 16 comments on **leadership**, such as “lack of clear direction,” “micromanagement by governing board and parents,” “many internal conflicts with administrators,” “individual parents drive policy,” and “inability to communicate and share a common vision of excellence.” Concerns about leadership were also reflected in 11 comments on the **governing board**, many of them rather colorful and heated: “board’s lack of professional respect for teachers and the role they have in the school,” “firing of principal mid-year without due process,” “dysfunction of governing board and whole community.”

Again, while “the opportunity to work with like-minded **colleagues**” was a major factor in teachers choosing the charter school, there were also 16 comments that revealed another side of these relationships: “people not working as a team,” “gossip,” “rumors and rudeness,” “negativity of staff,” “all teachers not committed to same degree,” “co-workers were unprofessional/incompetent,” “people without the same vision for the school, just looking for a paycheck.”

And a dozen teachers commented on the need for higher **salaries** and greater **benefits**.

The school's most serious unsolved problem:

Top concerns:

- Facility/physical space/need for their own building
- Leadership issues
- Funding/finances
- Consistency in retention and consistency in mission
- Time demands and workload

In response to the question on what they felt to be their own school's most serious problems, many teachers thought the top problem at their school had to do with the **facility/physical space** (40 comments). "Need adequate space for all instructional situations/activities." "Not enough room." "Location." "More space." "A new building."

A good many teachers also spoke of their concerns on a variety of **leadership issues**. Ten were critical of the board's leadership: "Operating council doesn't give director enough latitude in which to perform duties." "Staff not always involved in decisions by Operating Council." Another 10 commented on the relationships between the board and the school administrator, and about the stability and effectiveness of the administration in their schools: "finding a consistent director/stable administration," "retaining quality administrators (we can't pay enough)," "need an administrator who is a good fit for this school," "turnover of director."

In a somewhat related matter, quite a few teachers felt that a major unsolved problem at their school had to do with achieving **consistency.** There were six comments about achieving **consistency of mission:** "Consistency in interpretation of mission statement among all groups: board, faculty, students." "School's ability to take a stand and be consistent on school-wide decisions." And there were nine comments about **consistency in retention** of staff and administrators. ""Consistency from year to year with turnover of teachers and administration." "Keeping teachers; turnover of staff." "Retaining quality teachers; we can't pay enough."

There were 13 comments on issues of **funding/financial equity:** "equality with other public schools!" "Full (rather than 80%) funding." "Stable funding." Some spoke specifically of the need for "funding for our own building." There were eight comments on low pay and a lack of security regarding the teacher contract.

As the previous question on "sources of discontent" revealed, many teachers (13) see the **time demands and workload** on them as a serious problem. "Preventing teacher exhaustion; inadequate prep time." "Too much work load for teachers." "Finding the time and resources to plan dynamic units." "The whole staff is 'maxed' with things to do."

Many teachers also listed the following areas as their school's chief unsolved problem: **Discipline/student behavior/policies/staff –** "chronic misbehavior," "consistent discipline/rewards," "not taking serious action on students consistently tardy or absent." **Parent/family support**—"new families have been less dedicated (than founding families)," "finding a balance between parental control and tyranny of the vocal minority." **Students –** "helping student with high degree of needs, "unmotivated students and how to reach them," "student retention."